

MARSHALL COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM

Administrative Procedures

1.1

Effective Date: 11/4/2008

Revised Date:

Section: Board Operations

Subject: Media Relations Procedures

Related Policy: 1.503 News Releases, News Conferences and Interviews

I. DEFINITIONS

II. PROCEDURES

1. Purpose. The purpose of this handbook is to describe the coordination of and guidelines for news media access to the system.
2. Effective. Immediately.
3. Applicability. These procedures apply to all Marshall County School System (MCSS) employees.
4. News Media Coordination. The Central Office shall coordinate news coverage for the system and oversee communications between the school system and the news media. Any news conferences and public events in which news coverage is requested must be coordinated by or through the Central Office.
5. Spokespersons. The Director of Schools or designee serves as the primary spokesperson for the system on all matters of system-wide nature or that pertain to established system policy. The board chairman will be the official spokesman for the Board, except as this duty is delegated to others. The principal is the primary spokesperson regarding issues related to his/her one school or an organization of his/her one school.
 - a. When individual board members, the director of schools, or any school board employee expresses their views on any issue which is in opposition to a view expressed in board policy or action, they have the duty to make clear that the view expressed is not the official view of the Board or school system.
6. News Media Access to System Schools and Facilities. News reporters and other communications representatives must initiate their requests to interview, film, videotape, or photograph students or system personnel on system property through the Central Office. The following guidelines should be observed:
 - a. Professional Atmosphere. Although schools are public buildings, the principal is responsible for maintaining discipline and safety of all persons in the school. News media representatives are allowed on school premises only at locations designated by the principal or his/her designee. When on school property, media representatives must be accompanied at all times by the principal or his/her designee. Students may not be photographed, videotaped, or interviewed without parental permission (see Section 10).
 - b. Notification. The Central Office will contact the school administrator prior to a media visit. If media representatives appear on campus without notifying the Central Office, the school administrator should notify the Central Office. No media representatives will be allowed in the school without approval of the principal and the Central Office. Principals and other administrators, however, are encouraged to assist with any reasonable request for media access and cooperate to the fullest extent possible.

- c. Visitors Requirement. News media representatives must first register at the principal's office before proceeding to other areas of the school building. Reporters are considered visitors to the campus and required to sign in at the school office and comply with MCSS board policy and system procedures. Media representatives will be escorted by the principal or his/her designee while they are in the building.
7. News Media Access Refusal. If news media representatives conduct activities which are disruptive to the educational process, they will be removed from the school premises. The following procedures should be followed:
- Warning. If the media representative refuses to comply with guidelines established by the Central Office or the principal or designee, the principal or designee must warn the media representative that he/she must comply with media guidelines.
 - Request to Leave Premises. If the warning is ignored, the principal or designee should ask the media representative to leave the premises. The principal or designee will immediately contact the local law enforcement agency if the media representative fails to leave the premises. Upon the arrival of the police officers, the media representative will again be asked, in the presence of the police officers, to leave the premises.
 - Refusal to Comply. If the media representative refuses to comply, the principal or designee may ask the police officer to remove and/or arrest the media representative.
8. News Media Access in Crisis or Emergency Situations. In handling crisis situations on campus, building administrators should first contact emergency medical services personnel (if the situation is life-threatening). Following that, the general order of notification, depending upon the circumstances surrounding the situation, is first, the local law enforcement agency, and then the Director of Schools. During crisis or emergency situations, media access to schools and facilities may be limited to ensure student and staff safety or to maintain order. However, building administrators may designate an area on school property to conduct news briefings of the crisis or emergency situation. In these situations, normal access procedures for media and other visitors may be suspended in the interest of student and staff safety and an orderly emergency response. (See Addendum A – Addressing the Media).
9. Approval Requirements for News Media Interviews and Photography. Interviews, filming, photographing, or videotaping on system property may not occur without prior approval from the Central Office. Approval may be in the form of a fax transmission or email. Requests for interviews are generally granted, if the staff member from whom the interview is being sought agrees to participate. If the individual does not wish to be interviewed or photographed, he or she may decline; however, the staff member or the building administrator should notify the Central Office.
10. Additional Approval Requirements for Filming, Videotaping, and Photographing Children. Filming, videotaping, and photographing in classrooms, on campus, or in school-sponsored events are allowed for noninstructional purposes, provided that there is a signed parental consent form or release form for each child who participates in such activities. Signed parental consent forms must be in the school files and accessible upon request. General images of children in which no one student is identifiable do not require parental permission forms. In addition, the filming, videotaping, and photographing of children for classroom instructional purposes or extracurricular activities do not require parental permission forms.
11. General Media Guidelines. All MCSS personnel must adhere to the following general guidelines when working with the news media:
- The privacy of a student or employee is the foremost concern when working with the news media and must be considered prior to the release of any information;
 - If there is no prior clearance from the Central Office or the Director of Schools, names of students should never be released, under any circumstances, without prior parental consent or the consent of the student if he or she is 18 years of age or older;
 - Names of victims are not to be released. News media should be referred to the receiving hospital or police department for such information;
 - Home addresses and telephone numbers of students, private citizens, and those MCSS employees who have restricted home addresses and telephone numbers are not to be released to the media.

Media requests for system records shall be submitted in writing and referred to the Central Office. Costs of providing copies of records shall be in accordance with MCSS board policy.

III. ATTACHMENTS

1.1 Addendum A – Addressing the Media

Signature on File

Jacob Sorrells, Director of Schools