

News Media Protocol

Cooperation with the media is an important part of the relationship between the Bibb County School District ("District") and the local community. The public needs to understand the District's policies, plans, and programs, and the news media can help the District reach stakeholders throughout Bibb County. In working with the news media, as with other organizations, it is important District employees conduct themselves in a professional manner. This protocol provides some basic rules to assist in the orderly transfer of information and to protect District employees and students.

General Provisions

Access to a school or school grounds when students are present by news media representatives requires approval of the Department of Communications and School Affairs. News media representatives must contact the Department of Communications and School Affairs.

Media Contacts with District Employees

Once approved by the Department of Communications and School Affairs, District employees may speak directly with the news media. The following topics cannot be discussed:

- Information or questions about school employees
- Information or questions about students that would violate FERPA or HIPAA
- Disciplinary proceedings against an employee or a student
- Matters in litigation or matters that may result in litigation
- Potential criminal matters or criminal investigations
- Investigations by District personnel or law enforcement

In such cases, the employee approached by media representative should not provide information or give an interview. For his/her own protection, the employee should refer the representative to the Department of Communications and School Affairs. School employees may not be interviewed without the permission of this department.

News Media Contacts with Students

Media representatives often want student perspectives. The Department of Communications and School Affairs will provide guidance for students. Students must be willing to be interviewed. School staff are responsible for checking whether the student has a media opt-out form on file; this will ensure there is no parent restriction on student media contacts. A school administrator or staff member should always be present during student contact with media representatives.

Press Releases and Media Advisories

The Department of Communications and School Affairs will be responsible for making media aware of events taking place in the schools and the District. School administrators should provide the Department of Communications and School Affairs with as many details about the event as possible. Who, what, when, where, and why media would be interested are all helpful details when sending notice of events to media.

Requests for press releases and media invitations should be made in a timely manner to allow the Department of Communications and School Affairs time to invite media.

Newsletter and Social Media Submissions

The Department of Communications and School Affairs publishes a newsletter and social media items throughout the school year. Photos and detailed information should be emailed to the Department of Communications and School Affairs in a timely manner. When submitting items for publication, photos should be submitted as separate .jpeg attachments in the email. Photos should be clear and should not have any text/designs over the images. All identifiable students in the photos must have media clearance. School staff are responsible for checking whether identifiable students have a media opt-out form on file; this will ensure there is no parent restriction on the student appearing in any form of media.

Website

A representative from each school should be identified to serve as the school's webmaster. Each school's website should be updated regularly to ensure information is accurate and current. Information that should be posted to school websites include, but is not limited to, the following: school address and contact information, principal and assistant principals' names, bell times, school supply lists, dress codes, and updated calendar information.