

Policy News Media (820.00)

The Houston Independent School District Board of Education supports the rights of citizens to have access to information that affects school programs and services for children in HISD. The district encourages positive relations with news reporters and other communications representatives. Dissemination of timely, accurate, and newsworthy information to the community through the news media is the primary responsibility of the Press Office, working in cooperation with school administrators and other departmental supervisors.

District administrators and other personnel shall endeavor to create a positive, courteous relationship with members of the news media and maintain open communications on matters of a routine nature; however, the board expects the welfare of students to be the guiding principle in all contacts with the news media. Maintaining a safe, orderly educational environment on the campus and in the classroom must be the most important consideration when working with the news media at the school level.

Procedures News Media (820.00)

The Media Relations Department shall coordinate news coverage of the school district. The department is responsible for overseeing official communications between the school system and the news media by initiating story ideas as well as facilitating requests for news coverage from media representatives and district personnel.

The Media Relations Department provides assistance to school administrators regarding effective relations with the news media.

The superintendent of schools (or a designee) serves as the primary spokesperson for the district on all matters of districtwide interest. The president of the Board of Education serves as the primary spokesperson for the board. The chief school officers are the primary spokespersons regarding issues related to the schools in his or her individual office. The principal is the primary spokesperson regarding issues related to his or her individual school.

All news conferences and public events of a districtwide nature in which news coverage is requested must be coordinated by or through the Media Relations Department. District personnel should submit story ideas to the Media Relations Department as early as possible prior to the desired coverage date. These items should be submitted by e-mail to: news@houstonisd.org

News Media Access to District Schools and Facilities (820.100)

News reporters and other communications representatives must initiate their requests to interview, film, videotape, and/or photograph students and/or district personnel on district property through the Media Relations Department.

Although schools are public buildings, the principal is responsible for maintaining discipline and the safety of all persons in the school.

The principal may, therefore, develop procedures restricting the actions of news media personnel if those actions interfere with the orderly educational process. Likewise, district departments have a right to conduct business in a professional atmosphere, and departmental administrators may limit access to news media representatives, cameras, and other equipment within the department until the Media Relations Department is notified.

The Media Relations Department will contact the school administrator prior to a media visit. If media appear on campus without notifying the Media Relations Department, the school administrator should notify the Media Relations Department and the appropriate chief school office.

No media representatives will be allowed in the school without approval of the principal and notification of the school improvement officer (SIO), and the Media Relations Department. Principals and other administrators, however, are encouraged to assist with any reasonable request for media access and cooperate to the fullest extent possible.

Once contacted by the Media Relations Department, the school administrator or department head may request onsite assistance from the Media Relations Department before allowing access to media representatives. School

administrators are encouraged to seek the advice of the Media Relations Department and the SIO on addressing media requests; however, the decision regarding media access to the campus rests with the principal. Maintaining a safe, orderly educational environment on the campus and in the classroom is the most important consideration when working with the news media at the school level, and the building administrator's judgment in this regard will be the primary factor in determining the extent to which the news media will be allowed access to HISD facilities.

News representatives must first check in at the principal's office before proceeding to other areas of the school building. Reporters are considered visitors to the campus and are required to sign in at the school office and comply with HISD Board Policies and Administrative Procedures. Media representatives will be escorted by the principal or his or her designee while they are in the building.

In accordance with the Texas Education Code, Title 2—Chapter 37, Sections 37.105, *Unauthorized Persons: Refusal of Entry, Ejection, Identification*; and 37.107, *Trespass on School Grounds*, schools may refuse access to media representatives on school property if their presence or behavior would be disruptive to the school environment. Media representative without permission to be on campus should be asked to leave the property and call the HISD Media Relations Department at 713-556-6393.

- If the media representative refuses to comply with guidelines established by the Media Relations Department and/or the principal (or a designee), the principal or designee must warn the media representative that failure to comply with policies and guidelines regarding access will result in his or her arrest for criminal trespass.
- 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 HISD Police Department if the media representative fails to leave the premises. Upon the arrival of HISD police officers, the media representative will again be asked, in the presence of the police officers, to leave the premises.
- If the media representative refuses to comply, the principal (or a designee) may ask the police officers to arrest the media representative.

Media contact is not within the district's jurisdiction for approval or interruption if it occurs off district property and at non-district-related events.

News Media Access in Crisis/Emergency Situations (820.110)

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 HISD Police Department, then the school improvement officer, who will then contact the Media Relations Department.

During crisis/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 on 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.

News Media Interviews and Photography (Film and Videotape) (820.200)

Interviews, filming, or videotaping on district property may not occur without prior approval from the building administrator or department head and the Media Relations Department. Approval may be in the form of an e-mail.

Requests for interviews are generally granted if the individual 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 individual or the building administrator should notify the Media Relations Department.

Filming, videotaping, and photographing children 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 ([the media form is available here](#)). 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 for a purpose related to a cocurricular or extracurricular activity do not require parental permission forms. These provisions are in accordance with the Texas Education Code, Title 2—Chapter 26, Section 26.009, *Consent Required for Certain Activities*.

District 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 Media Relations Department or the SIO, names of students should never be released under any circumstance 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 HISD employees who have restricted home addresses and telephone numbers are not to be released to the media.
- Media requests for district records shall be submitted in writing and referred to the Media Relations Department. Costs of providing copies of records shall be in accordance with HISD Board Policy and Administrative Procedures.



HOUSTON INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

HATTIE MAE WHITE EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT CENTER
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Student Media Consent and Release Form

Throughout the school year, students may be highlighted in efforts to promote HISD activities and achievements. For example, students may be featured in materials to train teachers and/or increase public awareness of our schools through newspapers, radio, TV, the web, DVDs, displays, brochures, and other types of media.

I, as the parent or guardian of _____, hereby give HISD and its employees, representatives, and authorized media organizations permission to print, photograph, and record my child for use in audio, video, film, or any other electronic, digital and printed media.

- a. This is with the understanding that neither HISD nor its representatives will reproduce said photograph, interview, or likeness for any commercial value or receive monetary gain for use of any reproduction/broadcast of said photograph or likeness. I am also fully aware that I will not receive monetary compensation for my child's participation.
- b. I further release and relieve HISD, its Board of Trustees, employees, and other representatives from any liabilities, known or unknown, arising out of the use of this material.

I certify that I have read the Media Consent and Release Liability statement and fully understand its terms and conditions.

Please understand that failure to return this release form within ten (10) school days from the date of distribution will constitute approval of the above requests.

Please Print

Name of child _____ Grade _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Signature of parent or guardian _____

Date _____ Phone Number _____