

REGULATION

MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Related Entries: ABA-EA, KBA
Office: Superintendent of Schools
Department of Information

Public Information

I. PURPOSE

To establish procedures and responsibility for releasing information about school system plans, programs, and policies to the public

II. PROCEDURES

A. Release of Information

1. General

The Department of Information is responsible, at the direction of the superintendent and/or executive assistant, for disseminating information about the Montgomery County Public Schools. All information documents published by staff in the Central Office for general distribution to the public are prepared under the supervision of this department.

Staff of the department maintains contact with the news media, the staff of the school system, and the citizens of the county; and provides accurate and current information about the school system on request or on its own initiative. When authorized by the superintendent, the director of the department issues statements in the name of the superintendent of schools.

Principals and central office personnel are encouraged to consult the director of information about procedures and practices for releasing information. Principals are encouraged to send copies of school-produced newsletters, handbooks, and other documents to the Department of Information.

2. Contact with News Media or Other Organizations

News media representatives are encouraged to make contacts with Central Office personnel through the director of the Department of Information. Inquiries are promptly referred to the appropriate associate superintendent, deputy superintendent, or other knowledgeable staff member who can provide the information requested.

Persons representing news media or other organizations should make contact with school-based staff through the principal. The principal will, in the manner he/she considers appropriate, make available any and all information about the school, its operation, and its programs in conformity with Board of Education policies. Any questions concerning the release of information should be referred to the director of information.

Employees of Montgomery County Public Schools are encouraged to respond forthrightly to questions asked of them by the news media, groups, or individuals to the extent they possess accurate information. Employees should represent as school system policy or practice only those matters about which they are fully informed or for which they have direct responsibility.

Principles and directors are requested to inform the director of information about news media contacts with their schools and offices.

3. Emergency Situations

When an emergency occurs in a school or office (fire, accident, assault, etc.), the principal or director immediately informs the Office of the Superintendent of Schools by telephone. The superintendent's office notifies the director of information who works with the principal or director in coordinating the release of information to the news media and the public. In emergency situations, no staff member except the superintendent, principal, or director of information is authorized to give information to news media representatives. Strict adherence to this procedure will help to assure accurate and authoritative reporting.

B. Photographs of Students

With the approval of the principal, news media representatives may take pictures of students, staff, or other persons participating in school programs.

For other than MCPS or news media use, principals are advised to notify parents if picture-taking is planned so those who may have objection can notify the school. Parents' written permission must be obtained before any pictures of MCPS special education students are approved for display or publication, except for MCPS and the news media. Back or three-quarter shots of some special education students may be advisable.

The written permission of every person identifiable in a photograph of any MCPS school or school-sponsored activity must be secured if the photograph is to be used for:

1. Commercial advertising purposes
2. Any publication or other use for which the person(s) submitting it will receive payment
3. Illustrating a book or any published article for which the author(s) will receive payment

C. Articles, Written Statements, or Other Publication by MCPS Staff

Employees of the Montgomery County Public Schools are encouraged to submit articles to professional magazines or other periodicals for publication. However, staff member should not represent a policy, procedure, or practice as being that of Montgomery County Public Schools unless the article has been approved by the executive assistant/deputy superintendent/associate superintendent or program manager responsible for administering the policy, procedure, or practice.

Administrative History: Formerly Regulation No. 260-1, April 25, 1979