

# CSBA Sample Board Policy

Community Relations

BP 1100(a)

## COMMUNICATION WITH THE PUBLIC

Note: The following **optional** policy may be revised to reflect district practice.

The Governing Board recognizes the district's responsibility to keep the public informed regarding the goals, programs, achievements, and needs of the schools and district and to be responsive to the concerns and interests of the community. The Superintendent or designee shall establish strategies for effective two-way communications between the district and the public and shall consult with the Board regarding the role of Board members as advocates for the district's students, programs, and policies.

(*cf. 5020 - Parent Rights and Responsibilities*)  
(*cf. 9000 - Role of the Board*)

Note: Protocols for media relations, including the identification of Governing Board and staff spokespersons designated to meet with the media on behalf of the district, are addressed in BP 1112 - Media Relations. The district may choose to establish additional protocols for communications with other segments of the public.

The Superintendent or designee shall provide the Board and staff with communications protocols and procedures to assist the district in presenting a consistent, unified message on district issues. Such protocols and procedures may include, but are not limited to, identification of the spokesperson(s) authorized to speak to the media on behalf of the district, strategies for coordinating communications efforts and activities, and legal requirements pertaining to confidentiality as well as the public's right to access records.

(*cf. 1112 - Media Relations*)  
(*cf. 1340 - Access to District Records*)  
(*cf. 2111 - Superintendent Governance Standards*)  
(*cf. 3580 - District Records*)  
(*cf. 5125 - Student Records*)  
(*cf. 5125.1 - Release of Directory Information*)  
(*cf. 9005 - Governance Standards*)  
(*cf. 9010 - Public Statements*)  
(*cf. 9011 - Disclosure of Confidential/Privileged Information*)

The Superintendent or designee shall utilize a variety of methods to provide information to the public with access to information. Such methods may include, but are not limited to, district and school newsletters, web sites, social media, electronic communications, mailings, notices sent home with students, recorded telephone messages for parent/guardian information, community forums and public events, news releases, meetings with education reporters and editorial boards, presentations at parent organization meetings, and meetings with representatives of local governments, community organizations, and businesses.

## COMMUNICATION WITH THE PUBLIC (continued)

- (cf. 0510 - School Accountability Report Card)*
- (cf. 1113 - District and School Web Sites)*
- (cf. 1114 - District-Sponsored Social Media)*
- (cf. 1400 - Relations Between Other Governmental Agencies and the Schools)*
- (cf. 1700 - Relations Between Private Industry and the Schools)*

Note: Pursuant to Education Code 48985, when 15 percent or more of students enrolled in a school speak a single primary language other than English, all notices and reports sent to the parents/guardians of those students must also be written in that primary language. In addition, the Americans with Disabilities Act (28 CFR 35.130 and 35.160) requires districts to provide services and aids to ensure that a disabled individual is not excluded from participation or denied a benefit, service, or program on the basis of a disability. See BP 0410 - Nondiscrimination in District Programs and Activities.

In developing communications strategies, the Superintendent or designee shall take into account the needs of all members of the public, including individuals with disabilities and those whose primary language is not English.

- (cf. 0410 - Nondiscrimination in District Programs and Activities)*

The Superintendent or designee may provide staff members with professional development to assist them in effectively responding to requests for information or assistance by parents/guardians or members of the public.

- (cf. 4131 - Staff Development)*
- (cf. 4231 - Staff Development)*
- (cf. 4331 - Staff Development)*

The Superintendent or designee shall provide multiple avenues and opportunities for members of the public to give input on district and school issues and operations. Community members are encouraged to become involved in school activities, participate on district and school committees, provide input at Board meetings, submit suggestions to district staff, and use the district's complaint procedures as appropriate.

- (cf. 0460 - Local Control and Accountability Plan)*
- (cf. 1220 - Citizen Advisory Committees)*
- (cf. 1230 - School-Connected Organizations)*
- (cf. 1240 - Volunteer Assistance)*
- (cf. 1250 - Visitors/Outsiders)*
- (cf. 1260 - Educational Foundation)*
- (cf. 1312.1 - Complaints Concerning District Employees)*
- (cf. 1312.2 - Complaints Concerning Instructional Materials)*
- (cf. 1312.3 - Uniform Complaint Procedures)*
- (cf. 1312.4 - Williams Uniform Complaint Procedures)*
- (cf. 3555 - Nutrition Program Compliance)*
- (cf. 6020 - Parent Involvement)*
- (cf. 9322 - Agenda/Meeting Materials)*
- (cf. 9323 - Meeting Conduct)*

**COMMUNICATION WITH THE PUBLIC** (continued)**Mass Mailings at Public Expense**

Note: Education Code 7054 and 2 CCR 18901.1 prohibit the use of public funds for a mass mailing that (1) expressly advocates the election or defeat of a candidate or the qualification, passage, or defeat of a ballot measure or (2) if taken in context, unambiguously urges an election result. Violation of these provisions could result in an enforcement action by the Fair Political Practices Commission. See BP 1160, - Political Processes for language regarding the use of district funds for activities related to ballot measures, candidates, or lobbying.

Newsletters or mass mailings regarding ballot measures, candidates, legislative activities, or any other campaign activities shall be sent and distributed in accordance with law and Board policy.

*(cf. 1160 - Political Processes)*

Note: Government Code 82041.5, 89001, and 89002 prohibit the use of public funds for a mass mailing which features a Board member or includes the name, signature, or photograph of a Board member, except as specifically allowed by law. "Mass mailing" is defined as over 200 substantially similar pieces of mail sent in a single calendar month or course of an election. A "mass mailing" does not include form letters or mail sent in response to an unsolicited request, letter, or other inquiry, or permissible informational materials otherwise authorized by Government Code 89002. Because these laws are very complex, districts should consult with legal counsel if there is a question about the appropriateness of a planned mailing.

A mass mailing is prohibited if all of the following criteria are met: (Government Code 89001-89002)

1. The mailing involves sending a tangible item, such as a videotape, record, button, or written document, which is delivered by any means to recipients at their residence, place of employment or business, or post office box.
2. The item features a Board member or includes the name, office, photograph, or other reference to a Board member and is prepared or sent in cooperation, consultation, coordination, or concert with the Board member.
3. The costs of distribution, or any costs of design, production, and printing exceeding \$50, are paid with district funds.
4. More than 200 substantially similar items, as defined in Government Code 89002, are sent in a single calendar month.

## COMMUNICATION WITH THE PUBLIC (continued)

The above prohibition does not apply to the types of mass mailings specified in Government Code 89002(b), including, but not limited to: (Government Code 89002)

1. An item in which the Board member's name appears only in a roster containing the names of all Board members or in the letterhead or logotype of the stationery, forms, and envelopes of the district, a district committee, or the Board member
2. An announcement including only a single mention of the Board member's name which concerns a public meeting related to the Board member's duties or any official district event(s) for which the district is providing the use of its facilities, staff, or other financial support
3. A business card that contains only one mention of the Board member's name and no photograph of the Board member

However, any of the excepted mailings listed in items #1-3 above that meets the criteria for prohibited mass mailings shall not be sent within 60 days preceding an election in which a Board member to whom the mailing relates will appear on the ballot as a candidate. (Government Code 89003)

### Comprehensive Communications Plan

Note: The following **optional** section may be revised to reflect district practice. A comprehensive district communications plan may include strategies for internal and external communications on issues that are important to the district and community. The plan also may incorporate specific communications strategies required by other Board policies and administrative regulations. For example, see AR 0450 - Comprehensive Safety Plan, BP 1112 - Media Relations, AR 3516 - Emergencies and Disaster Preparedness Plan, and BP/AR 6020 - Parent Involvement.

The Superintendent or designee shall develop a written communications plan which establishes priorities for proactive community outreach to build support for district programs and issues. The plan shall identify specific communications goals aligned with the district's vision and goals for student learning. For each communications goal, the plan shall identify key messages, individuals or groups that can help the district achieve its goal, strategies tailored to each target audience, timelines, persons responsible for each activity, and budget implications.

*(cf. 0000 - Vision)*

*(cf. 0200 - Goals for the School District)*

As appropriate for each issue, target audiences may include parents/guardians, the media, local governmental agencies, businesses, community organizations and civic groups, postsecondary institutions, health care professionals, child care providers, community leaders, state or federal legislators or agencies, and/or other segments of the public.

**COMMUNICATION WITH THE PUBLIC** (continued)

The plan shall incorporate strategies for effective communications during a crisis or other emergency situation that may arise.

(cf. 0450 - *Comprehensive Safety Plan*)  
(cf. 3516 - *Emergencies and Disaster Preparedness Plan*)

The Superintendent or designee shall periodically evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of the district's communications plan and recommend to the Board whether the goals and key issues identified in the plan need to be revised to meet changing circumstances or priorities.

*Legal Reference:*

EDUCATION CODE

7054 *Use of district property or funds re: ballot measures and candidates*

35145.5 *Board meetings, public participation*

35172 *Promotional activities*

38130-38138 *Civic Center Act*

48980-48985 *Parental notifications*

GOVERNMENT CODE

54957.5 *Meeting agendas and materials*

82041.5 *Mass mailing*

89001-89003 *Newsletter or mass mailing*

CODE OF REGULATIONS, TITLE 2

18901.1 *Campaign-related mailings sent at public expense*

CODE OF FEDERAL REGULATIONS, TITLE 28

35.101-35.190 *Americans with Disabilities Act*

*Management Resources:*

WEB SITES

CSBA: <http://www.csba.org>

California School Public Relations Association: <http://www.calspra.org>

Fair Political Practices Commission: <http://www.fppc.ca.gov>

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**Policy Reference UPDATE Service**

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