

Title: **Media Relations**

Adopted: January 19, 2026

Effective: January 19, 2026

Amended/Reviewed: N/A

This procedure must be interpreted, applied, and implemented in ways that uphold Indigenous rights and human rights and responsibilities, promote accessibility, and prevent and address (and do not reinforce) discrimination/discriminatory barriers.

1.0 RATIONALE

The Durham District School Board (DDSB) recognizes the importance of clear, timely, accurate, and coordinated communication with the media in supporting public confidence in public education. Media relations play a key role in promoting transparency, sharing information about District and school initiatives, and celebrating the achievements and diversity of DDSB students, staff, and communities.

Effective media relations must be consistent, professional, and responsive, while also recognizing the deadline-driven nature of media work. All media interactions should be coordinated in an accurate and consistent manner of messaging across the system.

The DDSB recognizes that the privacy and safety of students, staff, and families are paramount. All media interactions must comply with consent, privacy, and legislative requirements, and must prioritize student well-being at all times.

This procedure establishes a consistent, system-wide approach to responding to media inquiries, coordinating spokespersons, and managing media access to DDSB properties and events. In doing so, it ensures that media communications reflect DDSB values of dignity, belonging, and accessibility, while upholding Indigenous and human rights, and applicable privacy and legal requirements.

Where appropriate, DDSB will prioritize timely internal communication with affected schools, staff, and families before, or at the same time as, media communications.

This procedure operationalizes the DDSBs Communications Policy by setting out clear roles, responsibilities, and processes for media relations across the DDSB. It is aligned with the Multi-Year Strategic Plan, and other applicable DDSB policies and procedures.

2.0 DEFINITIONS

2.1 Board Spokesperson: An individual authorized to speak publicly on behalf of the DDSB or the Board of Trustees.

- 2.2 **Crisis or Contentious Issue:** An incident or situation that may significantly impact student or staff safety, school or DDSB operations, or public confidence in the DDSB, and that is likely to attract heightened media attention.
- 2.3 **Media:** Organizations and individuals engaged in journalism and news reporting, including print, radio, television, and digital or online news platforms. This includes local, regional, provincial, and national outlets.
- 2.4 **Media Access:** Permission granted to a media representative to be present on DDSB property, attend DDSB events, or conduct photography, videography, or interviews, subject to this procedure and applicable legislation.
- 2.5 **Media Inquiry:** Any request from the media for information, interviews, comments, access to DDSB property, or the opportunity to capture images, audio, or video.
- 2.6 **Student Media Consent:** The documented permission required from a parent/guardian—or a student aged 18 or older—before participating in media activities (photography, interviews, video, audio).

3.0 RESPONSIBILITY

3.1 Chair of the Board of Trustees:

The Chair of the Board serves as the primary spokesperson for the Board of Trustees on matters related to governance, Board decisions, and policy direction, as set out in the Board's Bylaws and Trustee Code of Conduct.

3.2 Trustees:

Trustee interactions with the media are governed by the Board's Bylaws and Trustee Code of Conduct. Under those governance documents, the Chair of the Board is established as the primary spokesperson on behalf of the Board of Trustees.

3.3 Director of Education:

The Director of Education is the official spokesperson for the DDSB on matters related to system and school operations.

The Director of Education is responsible for:

- Supporting media relations practices that reflect the DDSB's commitments to accessibility, Indigenous rights and human rights, equity, and safe and inclusive learning environments.
- Speaking publicly on operational and administrative matters affecting the DDSB.
- Delegating spokesperson responsibilities to appropriate senior staff, as required, in collaboration with the Communications Department.

- Providing direction on system-level messaging as required and supporting the Communications Department in preparing public communications on significant operational matters.
- Working with the Communications Department and Senior Administration to coordinate media messaging and response during crisis or contentious issues.

3.4 Superintendents:

Superintendents play a key role in supporting schools, system departments, and the Communications Department in responding to media inquiries. Their responsibilities include operational leadership, escalation of issues, and ensuring that school and departmental responses are coordinated and accurate.

Superintendents are responsible for:

- Ensuring that school and departmental media-related practices reflect the DDSB's commitments to accessibility, Indigenous rights and human rights, equity, and safe and inclusive learning environments.
- Serving as the designated spokesperson on operational matters when appropriate and when designated by the Director of Education.
- Working with the Communications Department to ensure accurate and timely information is available to support the preparation of spokespersons and key messages.
- Advising the Communications Department of emerging issues, school-level incidents, or operational matters that may attract media attention.
- Collaborating with the Communications Department and the Director of Education to support media response during crisis or contentious issues.
- Supporting Principals and system staff in responding to media inquiries related to their areas of responsibility.

3.5 Communication Department:

The Communications Department is the central point of contact for all media activities involving the DDSB. The department provides system-level coordination, ensures consistency of messaging, and supports schools, departments, and the Board of Trustees in their interactions with the media.

The Communications Department is responsible for:

- Ensuring that media relations practices across the system reflect the DDSB's commitments to accessibility, Indigenous rights and human rights, equity, and safe and inclusive learning environments.
- Receiving, triaging, tracking and coordinating responses to all media inquiries, including determining appropriate spokespersons in collaboration with the Director of Education and Superintendents.
- Understanding the deadline-driven nature of media work and responding in a timely, professional manner that reflects the needs of different media

formats (e.g., print, radio, television, online).

- Preparing and supporting spokespersons by developing key messages, gathering background information, confirming facts with appropriate staff, and providing media briefings as required.
- Providing timely, accurate information to the media in collaboration with system departments, schools, and designated spokespersons.
- Coordinating and authorizing media access to DDSB schools, worksites, and events, ensuring that safety, privacy, and consent requirements are upheld.
- Maintaining media distribution lists and developing and distributing system-level media releases, advisories, statements, and public information notices.
- Advising Superintendents, Principals, and departments on responding to media inquiries and identifying proactive media opportunities that highlight student learning, staff excellence, District initiatives, and community partnerships.
- Supporting schools in managing media onsite, including advising on logistics and supervision requirements and confirming consent considerations.
- Monitoring local, regional, and provincial news coverage, identifying emerging trends and issues that may require system attention or response.
- Coordinating media messaging and responses during crisis or contentious issues, in collaboration with Senior Administration and the Director of Education.

3.6 Principals:

Principals play a central role in supporting safe, informed, and coordinated media relations at the school level. They are responsible for ensuring that school practices reflect DDSB expectations regarding student privacy, safety, accessibility, and consistent system messaging.

Principals are responsible for:

- Ensuring that school-level media practices reflect the DDSB's commitments to accessibility, Indigenous and human rights, equity, and safe and inclusive learning environments.
- Informing their Superintendent and the Communications Department when media inquiries are received or when media interest is anticipated at the school.
- Redirecting all media inquiries to the Communications Department and responding only when designated as spokesperson for school-specific matters.
- Collaborating with the Communications Department and the Superintendent to provide accurate information needed to prepare

spokespersons and key messages.

- Managing media access to school property in accordance with this procedure and ensuring that media does not enter the school or interview students or staff without authorization.
- Ensuring that student privacy and consent requirements are upheld before any photography, filming, or interviewing occurs.
- Supporting safe and supervised media presence on school property.
- Identifying and sharing proactive media opportunities with their Superintendent and the Communications Department.

3.7 School-Level Staff:

DDSB staff play an important role in supporting safe, coordinated, and consistent media relations practices at the school and system level.

Staff are responsible for:

- Directing all media inquiries to the Communications Department or the school Principal and not responding to media requests on behalf of the DDSB unless authorized to do so.
- Protecting student privacy by ensuring that no student is photographed, filmed, or interviewed without appropriate consent and supervision.
- Informing the Principal if media arrive on school property or if they become aware of media interest related to a school event or issue.

3.8 Media Representatives:

Media representatives visiting DDSB schools, administrative buildings, or other worksites must follow all DDSB expectations related to safety, privacy, and access to DDSB property.

Media Representatives are responsible for:

- Obtaining authorization from the Communications Department before attending DDSB schools, administrative buildings, worksites, or events, and signing in upon arrival in accordance with visitor procedures.
- Following all directions provided by DDSB staff while on DDSB property, including where interviews, filming, or photography may take place, and avoiding disrupting instructional time or operations.
- Respecting student and staff privacy at all times, including ensuring that no one is photographed, filmed, or interviewed without appropriate consent. Failure to comply may result in access being restricted or media being asked to leave.

4.0 APPLICATION AND SCOPE

This procedure applies to all Trustees, employees, volunteers, and third parties acting on behalf of the Durham District School Board (DDSB). It governs all

interactions with media representatives, including inquiries, interviews, photography, filming, and media attendance at DDSB schools, administration buildings and other worksites or events.

This procedure outlines the expectations, roles, and processes for managing media relations across the DDSB. It applies to system-level and school-level media inquiries, proactive and responsive media engagement, and media access to DDSB property. It also governs requirements related to student and staff privacy, consent, and safety during media activities, as well as coordinated media response during crisis or contentious issues.

This procedure applies to all forms of media, including print, broadcast, radio, and digital or online news outlets.

5.0 PROCEDURES

5.1 Receiving and Responding to Media Inquiries

The Communications Department is the central point of contact for all media inquiries.

The DDSB will make reasonable efforts to respond to media inquiries that are made in good faith, are accurate in their framing, and respect applicable privacy, consent, and legal requirements. Where inquiries are misleading, inaccurate, or not made in good faith, the DDSB may decline to respond or may limit its response.

5.1.1 When a Media Inquiry Is Received

- Record the reporter's name, outlet, contact information, and deadline (if provided).
- Do not provide comment unless authorized as a spokesperson.
- Redirect the inquiry immediately and/or forward any written, voicemail, or online inquiry to Communications.
- Notify the Principal or immediate supervisor if the inquiry relates to a specific school or program.

5.1.2 Communications Department Intake

The Communications Department will:

- Acknowledge the inquiry and clarify timeline expectations.
- Assess the topic, sensitivity, and required privacy or safety considerations.
- Identify the appropriate spokesperson in collaboration with the Director and/or Superintendent.
- Confirm accurate information with relevant staff.
- Prepare key messages or a statement for review, as required.

5.1.3 Responding to Media

The Communications Department will:

- Ensure all responses are accurate, consistent, and aligned with DDSB commitments to accessibility, Indigenous and human rights, equity, and safe and inclusive learning environments.
- Brief and support the designated spokesperson.
- Provide written responses when appropriate.
- Coordinate interviews when approved by the Director or Superintendent.
- Respond in a timely manner appropriate to media deadlines and the nature of the inquiry.

5.1.4 Information That Cannot Be Shared

Media responses will not include:

- Personal or confidential student or staff information.
- Details that violate privacy or consent requirements.
- Information related to active investigations, legal matters, or employee discipline.
- Unverified, speculative, or operationally sensitive information.

5.1.5 Internal Notifications

The Communications Department will notify:

- The Director of Education of significant or sensitive inquiries
- The Chair of the Board when inquiries relate to governance or Trustee matters
- Superintendents and affected Principals when inquiries relate to their areas

5.2 Media Access to DDSB Property

5.2.1 Authorization

- Media may only access DDSB schools, administration buildings or worksites with approval from the Communications Department.
- Principals and office administrators must confirm authorization before allowing media onsite.

5.2.2 Arrival and Sign-In

- Media must report to the main office or reception area and sign-in according to visitor procedures.
- Identification and credentials may be requested.

5.2.3 Supervision and Movement

- Media must remain accompanied by DDSB staff unless otherwise approved.

- Media may only access locations authorized by the Principal or Communications Department.

5.2.4 Filming, Photography, and Interviews

- No student or staff member may be filmed, photographed, or interviewed without appropriate consent.
- Principals or Communications may restrict or relocate media activity to protect students, staff, and school operations.

5.2.5 Unannounced Media

If media arrive without authorization, staff must:

- Request they wait in the office or reception area
- Contact the Principal immediately
- The Principal will notify Communications and/or their Superintendent

Media may be asked to leave if access is not permitted.

5.2.6 Disruption or Safety Concerns

Principals or Communications may restrict or revoke media access if activities:

- Disrupt learning or operations
- Compromise safety or supervision
- Violate consent or privacy requirements

5.2.7 Board Office Access

- Media may only access the Board Office through Communications authorization and must follow all sign-in and supervision requirements.

5.2.8 Events and School Activities

- Media attendance at school events must be coordinated through Communications in advance.
- Principals must ensure consent, safety, and supervision requirements are in place before media are permitted to participate.

5.3 Privacy, Consent, and Recording Rules

5.3.1 Student Consent

- Students may not be photographed, filmed, or interviewed without appropriate consent from a parent/guardian or from the student if they are 18 or older.
- Principals must verify consent before media enters classrooms, gyms, playgrounds, or other student spaces.

5.3.2 Sensitive Situations

- No media access is permitted during emergencies, medical incidents, investigations, or situations involving vulnerable or protected student groups.

- Principals and Communications may deny or restrict filming to protect privacy, safety, and dignity.

5.3.3 Staff Privacy

- Staff participation in interviews or photography is voluntary unless they are a designated spokesperson.
- Staff may decline to be filmed or photographed.

5.3.4 Classroom and Instructional Spaces

- Media access to classrooms must be authorized by Communications and the Principal, with consent confirmed in advance.
- Filming may not disrupt learning or compromise safety.

5.3.5 Audio/Video Recording

- Media must inform DDSB staff before recording audio or video on DDSB property.
- Covert or unauthorized recording is prohibited and may result in removal from the premises.

5.3.6 Social Media and Personal Devices

- Personal filming, livestreaming, or recording of DDSB students or staff by media representatives is subject to the same consent and privacy rules.

5.4 School-Level Procedures

5.4.1 Media Inquiries Received at Schools

When a school receives a media inquiry, the Principal will:

- Notify the Communications Department and their Superintendent.
- Redirect the reporter to Communications if contact is made directly with school staff.
- Not provide comment unless designated as a spokesperson for a school-specific matter.

5.4.2 Media Arrival at the School

When media arrive at the school:

- Request that they wait in the main office or designated reception area.
- Confirm with Communications whether access has been authorized.
- Permit access only after authorization has been verified.

5.4.3 Managing Media Onsite

When media are authorized:

- Ensure media sign in and are accompanied by staff while on DDSB property.
- Direct media only to approved locations.

- Ensure privacy and consent requirements are in place before filming, photography, or interviews occur.
- Relocate or restrict media activity if it disrupts learning or compromises supervision or safety.

5.4.4 Media on Adjacent Public Property

If media are present on sidewalks or other public spaces near the school:

- Notify Communications and the Superintendent immediately.
- Ensure students on school property are not permitted to approach or be approached by the media.
- Adjust recess, entry/exit routines, or supervision if needed to protect student privacy and safety.

5.4.5 Sensitive or Crisis Situations

In emergencies or contentious issues:

- Media is not permitted on school property unless authorized by Communications.
- The Principal will provide timely information to Communications and the Superintendent to support coordinated system messaging.
- All staff are reminded not to comment to the media.

5.4.6 Proactive Opportunities

When schools are planning an event that may attract media interest:

- Notify Communications in advance.
- Confirm consent requirements for students and staff.
- Coordinate logistics with Communications to ensure safe and appropriate media access.

5.5 Media Protocol During a Crisis or Contentious Issue

5.5.1 Media Inquiries

- All media inquiries related to a crisis or contentious issue must be directed immediately to the Communications Department.
- No employee, volunteer, or school council member may comment to the media unless designated as a spokesperson.

5.5.2 Spokespersons

- Communications will determine the appropriate spokesperson in collaboration with the Director of Education and Superintendent.
- Only authorized spokespersons may speak publicly during a crisis or contentious issue.

5.5.3 Messaging

- Communications will prepare and coordinate all media messaging during a crisis.

- Communications may issue a holding statement when information is unconfirmed or still being gathered.

5.6 Proactive Media Opportunities

- Schools and departments may identify positive stories, events, or achievements for potential media interest.
- Principals and system leads must notify the Communications Department in advance of any event where media may be invited or may reasonably attend.
- Communications will coordinate media outreach, confirm consent requirements, and support spokesperson preparation as needed.

6.0 APPENDICES

N/A

7.0 REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

- P COM 01 – Communications Policy