



Williamsville Central School District Media Guidelines

The Williamsville Central School District recognizes the important role the media plays in providing information to the community concerning educational programs, issues and events that happen in its schools.

It is the policy of the District to work cooperatively with the news media for coverage of issues and events involving the District, its students or staff. However, the Williamsville Central School District is dedicated to providing all students with a safe, learning environment without unnecessary disruptions. Therefore, the following guidelines are in effect at all schools and District facilities:

Media Requests

All media inquiries should be directed to the Director of Communications, by phone or email. Exceptions include athletic and/or extracurricular activity news coverage during games, tournaments, and/or performances conducted outside the normal school day.

Requests for interviews, photos, and/or videotaping of Williamsville Central School District staff members, students, or board members should be directed to:

Nick Filipowski, Director of Communications
Office: (716) 626-8009
E-mail: nfilipowski@willamsvillek12.org

David Morales
Office: 716-626-8048
E-mail: dmorales@willamsvillek12.org

Visiting Schools

Media should understand that it is the responsibility of the District to maintain an atmosphere that supports learning with as few disruptions as possible. Therefore, **no media is allowed on any school campus during the school day without prior permission** from the Director of Communications, the Superintendent, or the school Principal. If a member of the media is onsite without prior approval, he/she will be asked to leave school property immediately and will be directed to contact the District's Communications Office.

Anytime a member of the media is on District property, an authorized District or school designee will escort the media at all times to minimize disruption at the school and to assist with additional requests. Media is asked to keep in mind that testing, school-wide events, or other school activities may prohibit a media visit on a specific day.

Whenever on a school campus or at the District office, media representatives are asked to wear/display their press identification badges from their employer. This is in addition to any ID badges provided by the school/District.

Interviews with Staff Members and Faculty

The District employs many educators and administrators who are considered to be leaders in education. These individuals are prepared to discuss current and important issues with reporters. If you are interested in interviewing, videotaping, or photographing a District employee or school board member, you must contact the District's Communications Office.

Photographing or Interviewing Students

The Williamsville Central School District operates in compliance with Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). This law allows students and parents to opt out of the release of certain information about students including photographs. The District Communications Office works with each school to determine who cannot be photographed and/or interviewed according to FERPA guidelines. Therefore, interviews, photographs, or videography is not allowed without the prior approval from the Communications Director, the Superintendent, or building principal.

As a general rule, media may photograph/videotape students without parental consent during afterschool activities that are open to the general public such as athletic events.

Interviews with Board of Education Members & Media at School Board Meetings

The media is invited to attend all public meetings of the Williamsville Board of Education. Media may videotape and/or record any portion of a public meeting. The public meeting video is posted online the day after a meeting on the Williamsville Central School District BoardDocs web site, <https://go.boarddocs.com/ny/williams/Board.nsf/Public>. Also, the meeting video is broadcast on public access television Lockport TV (LCTV) Channel 1302 on the weekend following a public meeting (Saturday 9 a.m. & 7 p.m., Sunday, 1 p.m., Tuesday 1 p.m., Thursday 9 a.m., and Friday 5 p.m.).

In accordance with policy and long-standing best practice, **only the Board President has authority to speak to the media on behalf of the Board of Education** about issues related to the District and school board business. We respectfully ask media representatives to refrain from contacting other school board members for statements related to board or District business and actions.*

To avoid disruption of the meeting, reporters and photographers are asked to approach board members, guest speakers, or members of the audience outside of the meeting room. Further, interviews should be conducted outside the board meeting room in a pre-arranged location in the building. The Board President may request interviews be scheduled for a later time through the District Communications Office rather than conducting interviews before or after a board meeting.

Copies of the board meeting agenda, informational items, and other meeting materials are posted on the Williamsville Central School District BoardDocs website at:
<https://go.boarddocs.com/ny/williams/Board.nsf/Public>

School Emergencies

In the event of an emergency on school grounds, the District will work together with the Amherst Police Department, other emergency responders, and local officials to release accurate information as quickly as possible provided the information does not jeopardize the emergency response activities or conflict with federal privacy laws.

During an emergency, the District's immediate priority is to inform parents, staff members, and students directly by using our in-house communication tools and mass notification system, which includes text, email and voice messaging.

During an emergency, all media calls are referred to the District Communications Office to allow the crisis response team and school officials onsite to give full attention to relief efforts. The District will work as quickly as possible to provide accurate information to the media through a spokesperson, written statements via email, or news briefings. During an emergency, media **will not** be allowed on to school property (police enforced). Media will be assigned to a designated external staging area to ensure that the work of emergency response teams is not hindered.

**School board members have a right to free speech under the First Amendment of the United States. However, they also have a duty to abide by established board policy and protocols. In regards to media inquiries, only the Board President is authorized to speak on behalf of the board as a whole. When speaking publicly about issues related to the District, other board members should clearly state that they are expressing a personal opinion and their view on the matter does not represent an official position by the Board of Education.*