

**ARTICLE 6**

**GENERAL PUBLIC RELATIONS**

**(Series 6000)**

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## **6100 PUBLIC INFORMATION**

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It is the responsibility of the Board of Education to furnish full and accurate information including interpretation and explanation of the school plans and programs.

## **6200 USE OF STUDENTS IN INFORMATION PROGRAM**

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The participation of students in interpreting the educational program of the schools to the community shall be encouraged, with the understanding that:

1. Students shall not be exploited for the benefit of any individual or group;
2. Students shall participate only in appropriate situations;
3. The use of students shall always be evaluated in terms of the effect on the child;
4. Students shall not solicit or promote school district issues without approval of the Superintendent;
5. The best possible community relations grow from a superior teaching job in the classroom. Enthusiastic students with serious intentions, well directed by sympathetic and capable teachers, are certain to communicate with the parents and the community. Weber School District believes this is the cornerstone of good community relations.

## **6300 COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES AND PERFORMANCES BY STUDENTS**

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Although cognizant of the values, both social and scholastic, derived by students participating in various community sponsored activities, the following points should be used by principals in determining whether or not they may participate in such activities during school hours:

1. The participation in the project will not deprive students of time needed in acquiring basic skills.
2. The regular schedule will not be interrupted unless the majority of the students benefit through their participation.
3. Neither an individual nor the school as a whole shall be permitted to use school time in working on community sponsored projects unless such an undertaking is contributing to the educational program.

## **6400 VISITORS TO THE SCHOOLS**

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All visitors to a school building or a school facility during regular school hours must register at the main office of the school. A notice of this requirement will be posted at each entrance to the school. Suggested notice: "Welcome to our school. All visitors must register at the main office."

School buildings and school facilities are the property of Weber School District. As part of the District's safe school policy, it may be considered criminal trespass for anyone to enter a school building during regular school hours without permission. Those individuals not required to register at the school are students of the school, District employees, School Board Members, persons with written permission from the school administration and persons attending a school scheduled activity. All other individuals must register at the school office upon entering the facility.

### RULES GOVERNING VISITORS

#### Procedures:

All visitors must report to the school office. Employees of the school system (School Board Members, directors, coordinators, maintenance staff members, and others) are to advise the school principal or secretary that they are in the building. A visitor (a person not employed by the school system) must report to the school office and receive permission to be on the school grounds. If the school staff desires, visitors may be issued a "visitor's permit".

#### Supervision of Visitors:

Any person on school property who has not registered with the school office is illegally on school property and is to be asked for identification or to leave the school grounds. If the visitor refuses to leave the school grounds or creates any disturbance, the principal has the authority to request aid from the law enforcement agency.

#### Type of Visitors Covered:

These rules apply to all persons other than teachers and students enrolled in the school who may come to the school for any reason during the school day.

#### Violation:

Individuals in violation are subject to criminal action.

Approved by the Board 02/15/1995

## **6500 PARENT INVOLVEMENT**

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The Weber Board of Education recognizes the necessity and value of parent involvement to support student success and academic achievement. In order to assure collaborative partnerships between parents and schools, the board, working through the administration, is committed to:

1. Involving parents as partners in advisory functions.
2. Establishing effective two-way communication with all parents respecting the diversity and differing needs of families.
3. Developing strategies and programmatic structures at schools to enable parents to participate actively in their children's education.
4. Providing support and coordination for school staff and parents to implement and sustain appropriate parent involvement from kindergarten through grade twelve.
5. Utilizing schools to connect students and families with community resources that provide educational enrichment and support.

Approved by the Board 03/1993

## **6600 NAMING OF SCHOOLS/FACILITIES**

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It shall be the policy of Board of Education in naming of new schools, buildings, parts of buildings, rooms or other facilities to do so in a way which will promote the highest values of the District.

1. A committee will be appointed by the Board of Education to recommend the name of a new school or portion of existing schools. This committee shall consist of the following: a Board Member, a building administrator, PTA representative, teacher, student leader, community council representative, classified employee representative, a local community leader, Elementary or Secondary Director and Director of Facilities. The Elementary or Secondary Director will chair this committee.
2. The committee will consider name recommendations submitted by responsible individuals or groups. The suggested names for schools may reflect general geographic areas, reflect areas of broad general interests or carry the name of prominent local citizens when appropriate. It will be the responsibility of this committee to present to the Board of Education a minimum of three possible names that will be prioritized with the committee's rationale for that prioritization.
3. The committee will review donations, either cash and/or in kind, and consider the possibility of naming buildings or facilities in the name of the donor. The committee will then present their conclusions to the Board of Education
4. Potential names will be presented to the Board of Education by the committee chairperson as a discussion item in a regular Board meeting. Following a minimum of two weeks, the naming of the school will be placed on the Board agenda as an action item for Board approval.

Approved by the Board 11/1996

## **6700 REUNIFICATION OF PARENTS AND STUDENTS FOLLOWING AN EMERGENCY**

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### References:

Utah Administrative Code R277-400 <https://rules.utah.gov/publicat/code/r277/r277-400.htm>  
<http://iloveguys.org/>  
<http://iloveguys.org/srm/Standard%20Reunification%20Method.pdf>

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### PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to set guidelines for the release of students following an emergency situation. The reunification process involves establishing a secure location for students, notifying parents, and reuniting students with parents in a safe and orderly manner. This procedure may take place after a crisis and evacuation of a school, and could occur at an off-site location.

### ADMINISTRATIVE CODE

Utah Administrative Code R22-400 (School Facility Emergency and Safety) establishes general criteria for both emergency preparedness and emergency response plans of schools and LEAs in the event of school emergencies. A LEA's plan shall contain measures which assure that school children receive reasonably adequate educational services and supervision during school hours during an emergency and for education services in an extended emergency situation.

R277-400.5 requires evacuation procedures shall assure reasonable care and supervision of children until responsibility has been affirmatively assumed by another responsible party. LEAs or schools shall not release children younger than ninth grade at other than regularly scheduled release times unless the parents or other responsible persons have been notified and have assumed responsibility for the children. LEAs or schools may release older children without such notification if a school official determines that the children are reasonably responsible and notification is not practicable.

Although the provisions in R277-400.5 specify children younger than 9<sup>th</sup> grade shall not be released unless the parents or other responsible persons have been notified, Weber School District extends this condition to students younger than 10<sup>th</sup> grade. The purpose for this extension is to provide uniformity at the junior high school level since all junior highs in Weber School District include grades 7<sup>th</sup> through 9<sup>th</sup>. High school students (grades 10<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup>) may be released without such notification according to code.

### DEFINITIONS

Parents – For the purposes of this section, the term “parents” refers to a student’s parent, guardian, or responsible person who is listed as an emergency contact for the student.

LEA - Local Education Agency (school district)

MOU - Formal agreement between two parties to establish official partnerships

SRM - Standard Response Method

SRP - Standard Response Protocol



Student demographic card – A card that contains a student’s name and data, along with the parent or responsible person’s contact information

WSD Notifier - The notification system used by Weber School District to send information to parents. Parents must “opt-in” in order to receive messages

#### STANDARD RESPONSE PROTOCOL

In cooperation with local law enforcement, Weber School District follows established guidelines set forth in the Standard Response Protocol (SRP). Through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), Weber School District has entered into an agreement with the “I Love U Guys” Foundation for use of licensed materials regarding the SRP.

#### STANDARD REUNIFICATION METHOD

Part of the SRP is the Standard Reunification Method (SRM) which provides recommendations for the release of students to parents following an emergency situation.

Reunification involves the management of the physical location of students, and the process of safely reuniting students with parents. This procedure is conducted by district and school personnel.

#### REUNIFICATION TEAM

Weber School District has a designated reunification team comprised of district employees. The team is supervised by the Community Relations and Safety Specialist or his/her designee who will act as the incident commander.

In the event of an emergency and the need to reunify students with parents, the team will be activated and deployed to oversee the reunification process. Once on-scene, the district team will assume command and integrate school personnel into the team. It should be noted that school personnel may be directly affected by the crisis and may not be able to adequately perform in certain roles. The concept behind having a district-level team is to provide an emotionally detached, independent group to oversee operations.

During a large scale catastrophe such as an earthquake where multiple schools are affected, individual school teams may be required to complete the reunification process with minimal or no assistance from the district team. School personnel should be familiar with the SRP and SRM in order to effectively complete all required tasks. The district will provide training to administrators and safety facilitators on the reunification procedure. Each school should also conduct regular drills on the SRP and SRM.

#### OBJECTIVES

The core concept of reunification rests upon accountability while maintaining simplicity. This is accomplished by meeting the following objectives:

- 1) Establishing a safe and secure staging area for students beyond the field of vision of the public.

- 2) Sending out proper and timely notifications.
- 3) Establishing check-in and verification stations for parents.
- 4) Establishing a systematic procedure for retrieving students.
- 5) Establishing a reunification area where students are released to parents.

## EQUIPMENT

The district has an emergency response trailer that is housed in the Tech Services building at BDO. The enclosed trailer contains all supplies and equipment necessary to complete the reunification process. Items include, but are not limited to, student demographic cards, appropriate signage, safety vests, folding tables and chairs, and four large canopies.

The trailer is deployed by contacting Tech Services (801) 479-7989. Tech Services employees will then respond to the designated location with the trailer and will assist with the reunification process.

## STUDENT STAGING AREA

Under the SRP, law enforcement is primarily responsible for the evacuation procedure following an emergency. According to each school's emergency plan, pre-determined evacuation sites should be identified. Law enforcement officials will ultimately have the discretion to designate a safe and proper evacuation site.

The student staging area at the evacuation site should be able to reasonably accommodate students and staff, and should be out of the line of site of parents and the public. The location should also be practicable for the reunification procedure to take place.

Once students are secure in the staging area, law enforcement will turn command over to school officials to begin reunification. Students should be organized into grades with teachers having the primary responsibility for the safety and well-being of their students. Law enforcement will remain on scene in a secondary role to assist with the process and to provide security. Nursing and medical personnel should also be in place near the student staging area in case of an emergency.

## STAGING AREAS AND PROCEDURES

Independent stations shall be established to ensure the reunification is conducted in a safe and orderly fashion.

- 1) Parking – Designated parking areas shall be established for parents. Traffic flow patterns should be identified to allow for easy ingress and egress.
- 2) Check-in station – Signage will be in place directing parents to the initial check-in station. This area should be highly visible with personnel from the reunification team positioned to act as greeters. At this station, parents will be required to fill-out a demographic card. A designated number of reunification team members will

oversee this task. Once the card is complete, parents will be directed to the verification station.

- 3) Verification station – This station will be broken up alphabetically into different sections according to students’ last names (e.g. A-E). There should also be a section designated as “Special Circumstances.” Parents will present the demographic card to a reunification team member. The information on the card will be verified with the school’s emergency contact records to ensure the person presenting the card is authorized to take custody of the student. This individual must also present a valid form of identification such as a driver’s license. Once verified, the card will be given back to the person and they will be directed to the parent waiting area.

If an individual is not listed on the student’s emergency contact list, they will not be allowed to pick-up the student. They should then be directed to the “Special Circumstances” section where school officials can try to resolve the issue.

If an individual does not have identification, they will be directed to a law enforcement officer at the “Special Circumstances” station to try and verify identity.

The “Special Circumstances” section may also be used for parents with disabilities/ADA access concerns, or language communication barriers. In the tragic event of a student injury or death, parents will be directed to a “Student Services” station. This area will be isolated from the other stations with appropriate support staff on-scene, including crisis counselors. Law enforcement may also designate a portion of this area for investigative purposes where witness interviews could be conducted.

- 4) Parent waiting area – Once verified, parents will be directed to the parent waiting area. At this station, a designated “runner” from the reunification team will meet with the parent to obtain the bottom portion of the demographic card. The parent will retain the top portion of the card. The parent will then be directed to the reunification station while the runner retrieves the student.
- 5) Reunification station - Once the runner has retrieved the student from the student staging area, they will take them to the reunification station. The runner will then match the two portions of the demographic card. After the portions of the card are verified, the student will be reunited with their parent as part of a controlled released. They should then be instructed to exit the grounds.

In the event that a parent does not respond to pick-up a student, efforts will be made to contact the parent to make other arrangements. This may include transporting the student home by bus.

## NOTIFICATIONS

Typically, notifications should only be sent to parents after students are secure in the student staging area. Messages will be sent out via the WSD Notifier alerting parents of the situation along with providing details on the reunification process. Information should include the nature of the incident, the location of the evacuation site, and other pertinent instructions. Details should include the designated time to pick-up students, and a reminder to bring ID. The WSD Notifier utilizes text messaging, email, Twitter, and school websites. In addition to the WSD Notifier, information may also be sent out using the school's messaging platforms.

During an emergency, it is strongly discouraged that students and teachers send out individual notifications. Once the scene is secure, school officials may consider having students send a notification to their parents advising them that they are safe and to not respond to the school until directed to do so. Depending on the situation, it may be recommended to keep cellular network usage at a minimum.

School officials should expect to encounter a large number of parents arriving at the scene immediately following a crisis and after receiving notification of the reunification procedure. Some of these parents could be emotional, upset and impatient. It's extremely important to maintain the integrity of the process and to remember there is no set timeframe for completing reunification.

## TRANSPORTATION

In the event that circumstances require transporting students to an off-site location, contact will be made with the Transportation Department to arrange for busing (801) 476-7930. The Weber County Sheriff's Office has two pre-determined evacuation sites in the county. Other locations may also be considered.

## CONCLUSION

Weber School District has a process in place to safely and systematically reunite parents with students following a crisis situation. This policy sets forth guidelines for establishing a secure location for students, notifying parents of the reunification procedure, and reunifying students with parents in a safe and orderly manner. These protocols are in-line with state administrative code and follow the recommendations set forth in the Standard Reunification Method, a nationally recognized program developed by the "I Love U Guys" Foundation for dealing with school emergencies. Understanding that no two emergencies are alike, these guidelines may be modified as individual circumstances dictate.