

Public Abstract

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Title:Crossing the School House Gates: A Media Access Audit of Public High Schools

This research tested the media access policy adopted by a large independent public school district in Oklahoma to determine if its high schools comport with district rules as applicable to self-governance theory. The researcher visited nine high schools in a large Oklahoma public school district and observed administrators'™ willingness to comply with their own Board of Education policy on media access. The researcher examined the levels of access granted reporters, if story the topic was a deciding factor in granting access, and the timeliness in which the administration responded. Seven of nine schools followed the policy, though not always in a timely manner. One school denied a request for access based on the story topic, while another sent the reporter off campus based upon her profession. Other administrators were unperturbed by a media presence in their schools, allowing the researcher to freely roam the school. During debriefing, many administrators reported that relationships between journalists and schools had more bearing on campus admission than strict interpretation of board policy.