



Media Guidelines

August 2009

Why bother with the media?

- Our cooperation helps ensure that our side gets told. Reporters have story assignments and they will always find something to fill the news hole.
- Positive media relationships during routine times will help us get our information out during difficult times.
- It's an opportunity to inform the public and raise awareness about an issue.
- It's an opportunity for us to demonstrate our ability to educate BVSD children and manage public resources.

Whose responsibility are media relations?

- All of us have a responsibility.
- The Communications Division provides reporters with ideas for stories and photos that promote the district and illustrate our needs and challenges. We also provide background information to help put complex issues in context and connect reporters with the best sources of information for a particular story.
- The Communications Division is responsible for coordinating the district's responses to media inquiries so we have a consistent message to our audiences.
- Administrators are the best source of information about their school or department and people like to hear from the "expert."
- The Communications Division is here to support you by making arrangements, helping you set reasonable parameters to limit disruption to the school day, and helping with interview preparation and written statements. We will speak for you when you cannot be available.

When the media calls . . .

- Contact the Communications Division even if you plan to handle the response so we are aware of the story before you speak with the reporter.
- Always tell the truth.
- Have a key message – that one thing you want the reader or listener to remember.
- Take a few minutes to gather the information and consider your key message; then call the reporter back.
- Keep your response brief. The longer you talk – 15 seconds is a good rule – the greater chance your comments will be taken out of context because they have to be edited.
- Return calls to reporters promptly and treat them courteously.
- Never talk off the record.
- Be fair and consistent with all media.
- Be aware of your non-verbal communications (gestures, expressions, dress) especially with TV reporters.

Working with media during an emergency . . .

- During an emergency situation when a crisis team has been assembled, all communications with media are coordinated through the Communications Division so you can focus on your students and staff.
- Work with the Communications Division to determine the school/BVSD message.
- Give a brief script to everyone who answers the phone and channel all media calls to one number, probably the Communications Division (720-561-5824).

Tips for positive news coverage . . .

- News must be timely; let the media know about story ideas well in advance.
- Newspapers and television like stories with action and photo possibilities.
- Newsworthy events or topics are unusual or tied to other news.

Strengths and weaknesses of media relations . . .

- Public institutions have a pre-existing relationship with the media. We determine if it's positive or negative.
- Mass media reaches a lot of people whether you want to reach them or not.
- Mass media is an effective way to provide information and increase awareness about issues.

How to contact the Communications Division . . .

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