

MEDIA

RELATIONS

MADE EASY





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MEDIA RELATIONS

It's going to happen. Sooner or later, as a school administrator, you will have to communicate with the media.

But it doesn't have to be a painful experience. Contrary to popular belief, reporters aren't that bad. In fact, in most cases they are responsible people doing a tremendously difficult job under extreme pressure and deadlines. It is important to understand that fact when working with reporters.

This booklet is designed to help you through the media relations process. For those of you who are well versed in media relations, this publication will be a good refresher. For anyone new to this process, this booklet will take you step-by-step through media relations, providing guidance and tips on how to work well with reporters.

Media relations is not an exact science. In fact, your experiences working with reporters will vary from case to case and reporter to reporter. From getting the good news out about your school to handling crisis situations, this booklet is designed to help you.

Remember, when working with the media, knowledge is the key.

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

Public Relations & Governmental Affairs: 754-321-2300

Safety Department: 754-321-4200

SIU/Professional Standards: 754-321-0735

Your Area Office: 754-_____



THE MEDIA - WHY DO WE NEED THEM?

"All they do are bad stories."

"They never look at the positive things happening, just the negative."

"They don't care if they get it right, just that they get it first."

Sound familiar?

For many of us, these statements express how we feel about the media. While there may be some truth to these sentiments, there are three things that are fact:

- (1) The media isn't going away anytime soon;
- (2) Sooner or later, as a school administrator, you'll have to deal with them;
- (3) They can help us get our "good news" out to the public.

You may ask: "Why do I have to talk with reporters? Can't someone else do it?"

Well, in some cases yes. If an emergency situation or crisis arises at your school, the Public Relations & Governmental Affairs Department is in place, ready to spring into action and help you. But during the course of a school year, there are times when **you** will be the point-person for the media.

We all know things happen in and to our schools that are not always positive. And reporters are quick to cover many of them. They also shine the spotlight on many of the "good" things that happen, too. And **that's** why we need them - they are the main conduit for information to our community.

You have to look at it as a give-and-take situation. If you want reporters to cover a "good" thing at your school, you have to be available to reporters when something "bad" happens.

We want the **whole** story of education to get out, which is why we need to work as hard as we can with the media. If we just allow them to cover the "bad" things and don't work to promote all the positive things happening, our community is going to get an even more slanted view of Broward's school system.

It's a delicate balancing act – and it isn't perfect.

So don't view the media as the "enemy," but rather an "ally" when it comes to promoting all the wonderful things happening at your school. You, your staff and your students work hard, and all of you deserve to be recognized.

And *that* is why we need the media.



INTERNAL & EXTERNAL AUDIENCES

Before sending out your message, it is important to know who your audience is. Basically, there are two audiences – internal and external. Determining what groups are in each category is pretty easy.

Internal Audience: Anyone inside the District, or who works closely with Broward County Public Schools. That can include, but is not limited to:

Area Offices
Bus Drivers
Employees' Unions
Faculty

Maintenance Workers
Parents
School Board Members
School Nurses

School Resource Officers
School Staff
Students
Superintendent of Schools

Keeping our employees up-to-date with information is vital. Word of mouth is a very powerful means of communication in our community.

Remember, if someone hears you work for an organization, like the School Board, they immediately think you know **everything** there is to know about that organization – regardless of what department you are in.

By making sure all employees are kept "in-the-loop," you can ensure accurate information is shared.

External Audience: As the term implies, these are individuals or groups outside the District community. Your school and the District communicates with literally dozens of external audiences. They include, but are not limited to:

Advisory Groups
Alumni
Chambers of Commerce
City Officials
Clergy

College Recruiters
Educational Foundations
Fire Department
Guest Speakers
Police Department

Retirees
State & Federal Legislators
Taxpayers Without Children
Vendors
Volunteers



WHAT IS NEWS?

There are probably as many definitions of news as there are people trying to define it. There are, however, certain elements journalists consider when examining an event.

IT IS NEWS IF...

- It has significance to the general public
- It is timely
- There is human interest
- It is unique or it is something new to the area
- There's nothing else going on that day (slow news day)

Along with the above points, there are two general "categories" of news to consider: "Hard News" and "Soft News."

Hard news is any fast-breaking item of significance. These stories usually lead the evening news or are found in the main sections of the newspaper (Front section or Local section).

Some examples of Hard News are:

- Latest test scores released
- New/amended District policies
- Boundary changes
- Teacher(s) arrested
- Student(s) arrested
- Lawsuit(s)

Soft news is generally light and feature oriented, and usually offers an in-depth look or examination of students, programs or issues. While some people may feel their event is hard news, after examination, it may actually be soft news.

Some examples of Soft News are:

- Innovative teaching methods
- SRO involved in clubs/activities
- Teacher wins award
- Assemblies
- Class doing community service
- School debuts butterfly garden
- Award-winning band/club
- Students/teachers honored



WHO SHOULD WORK WITH THE MEDIA?

Remember, working with reporters isn't all gloom and doom. Sometimes reporters are calling about something "good" that's happening.

It can be anything from taking photographs of new classrooms (good) to reporting on an accident involving students on campus (not so good). Depending on the situation, different people may take the lead when talking with the press.

In most cases, the principal should be the main point person when working with reporters. However, in some cases, a staff member other than the principal – but authorized **BY** the principal – can be the one to work with reporters (i.e. assistant principal, guidance counselor, etc.) That is usually for "soft news," such as:

- Upcoming PTA event
- Holiday celebration
- Student or staff member honored
- Character Day in the media center
- Tips on getting scholarships and financial aid for college

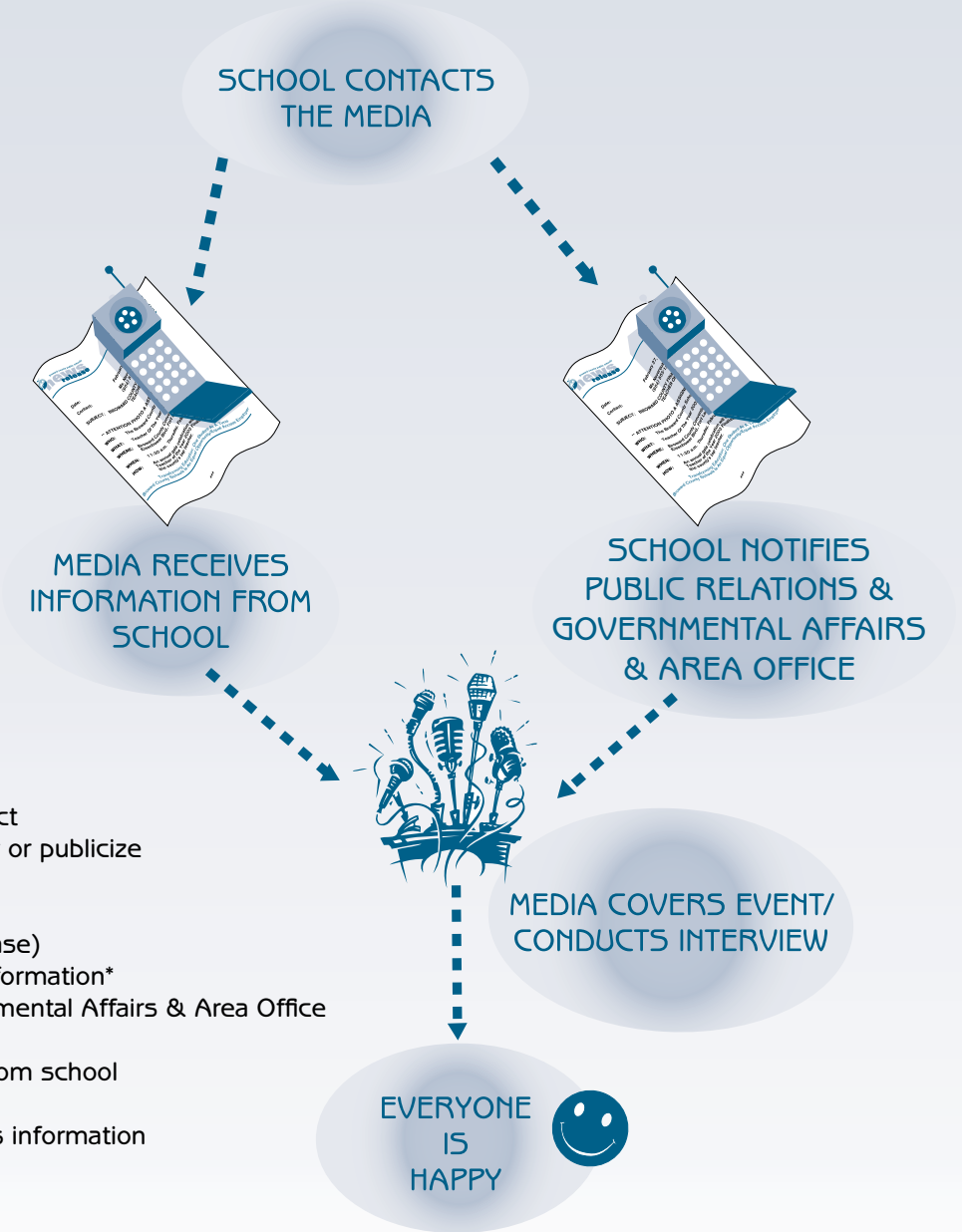
When it comes to emergency situations, the principal **MUST BE** the point person for the school. That does not mean; however, that the principal will be left all alone as solely responsible for talking with reporters.

During a crisis, the **Public Relations & Governmental Affairs Department** will step in and provide a "spokesperson" who can speak directly with the media. The Public Relations & Governmental Affairs Department will work with the principal to gather information as well as provide updates and instructions on anything that needs to be done.

Remember, the Public Relations & Governmental Affairs Department can help you through these situations – and there is no such thing as a silly question. That is why the Public Relations & Governmental Affairs Department is here – better to ask now than be sorry later.



SCHOOL INITIATED MEDIA CONTACT

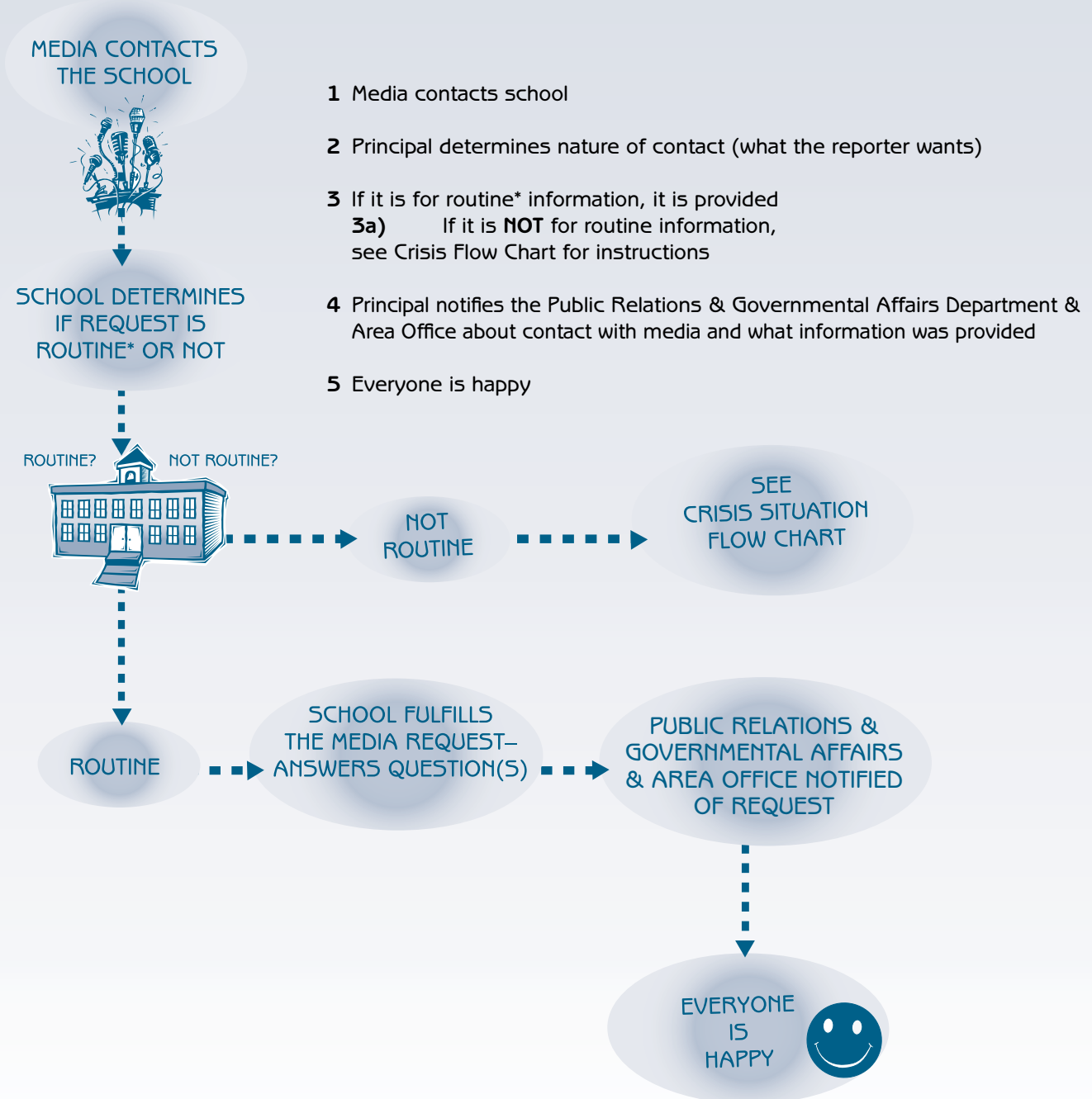


- 1 School has an event or subject they want the media to cover or publicize
- 2 School contacts the media (phone call and/or press release)
2a) School provides same information* to Public Relations & Governmental Affairs & Area Office
- 3 Media receives information from school
- 4 Media covers event/publicizes information
- 5 Everyone is happy

*ANY documents provided to the media must also be provided to the Public Relations & Governmental Affairs Department (news releases, reports, statistics, audits, etc.)

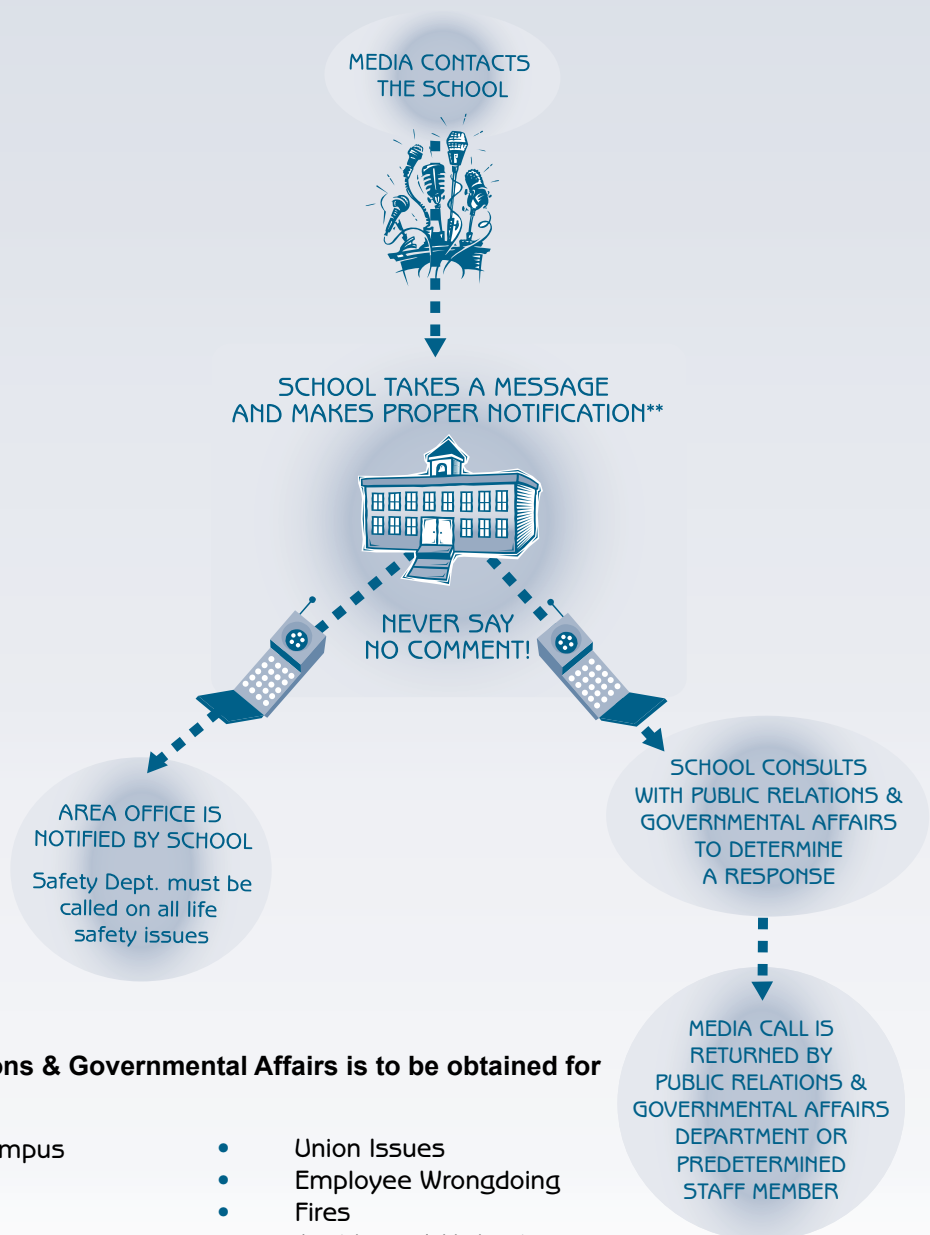


HANDLING ROUTINE* MEDIA REQUESTS



*Routine information requests: enrollment numbers, hours, academic programs, extracurricular activities, student activities, awards and honors, assemblies, performances, concerts, etc.

WORKING WITH MEDIA ON CONTROVERSIAL & CRISIS SITUATIONS*



***Guidance from Public Relations & Governmental Affairs is to be obtained for the following:**

- Media Photography on Campus
- Legal Matters
- Crimes
- Safety Issues
- Disciplinary Matters
- Protests
- Disgruntled Employees
- Union Issues
- Employee Wrongdoing
- Fires
- Accidents / Abductions
- Employee Issues On or Off Campus
- District-Wide Issues or Board Policies

** School staff should never immediately refuse a reporter's request



A CRISIS ARISES- NOW WHAT?

Okay, so the media is at your doorstep and the helicopters are flying over your campus. What do you do?

- First thing - **DO NOT PANIC**. Make sure your campus is secure - coordinate this through your staff, security specialists and SRO [keep an eye open for "visitors" – they may be Media].
- Follow the Flow Chart instructions for Crisis Situations - make sure all the proper phone calls are made.
- Find out as many facts and details on the situation as you can. Separate rumor from the truth.
- Contact the appropriate authorities and the Safety Department when a crisis arises and give them as many details as are available.
- Depending on the nature and time of the emergency, make sure employees, students and parents are notified through media announcements, ParentLink calls and/or letters sent home regarding the status of facility operations and the resumption of work and/or school (Public Relations & Governmental Affairs can help with this).
- If other community groups are involved in school programs and will be affected - such as after-school care - make sure they are kept informed as well.

AFTER THE CRISIS

- Any visits to the "emergency area" must be approved by the on-site administrator and coordinated with Public Relations & Governmental Affairs.
- For restricted areas, stock photos may be made available to the press (if available) and coordinated with Public Relations & Governmental Affairs.
- Announce to key groups any decisions relating to employee or community relief, facility reconstruction or anything else appropriate.

Other Items you should have ready in case of an emergency:

- A general description of your facility (i.e. number of buildings, number of students, etc.)
- Extra people to handle phone calls
- List of businesses which support the school



THE PRESS RELEASE

To write an effective press release, you must capture the attention of your audience - specifically reporters and editors. With so many press releases being sent to the Media daily, you want to “hook them” in the first paragraph with the most important information.

No matter the style of your press release, there should be one constant - the 5 Ws and H. This concept is behind every reporter’s story, so you know they will be looking for this information.

- **WHO?** Who is involved? Who does it affect? This is the most important of all the Ws because people (that includes reporters, too) are always more interested in people rather than things.
- **WHAT?** What happened? What is going to happen? This is the reason reporters go out on a story.
- **WHERE?** The closer to home something is, the more it grabs our attention. If you can, be specific - if something is happening in your school’s media center, make sure you say that rather than just providing the school address. This helps reporters get a better idea of the story.
- **WHEN?** There is nothing more frustrating for a reporter than to receive a release on a unique event and not have the date and time listed. Timeliness is important - the closer to “now” an event is, the more it grabs us.
- **WHY?** Along with HOW, this is the heart of the story. Why is it happening and what does it all mean?
- **HOW?** Along with WHY, this is the heart of the story. How is it being done? How did you arrive at the point you are at now?



THE PRESS RELEASE: HOW TO..

The tried-and-true method of alerting reporters to events is the press release. When writing a press release, remember the following basic rules:

- Use short sentences
- Use descriptive language
- Use short first paragraphs
- Highlight the positives
- Include the 5 Ws and H

When you are ready to write the release, consider the following "rules"

- Use double space type
- Keep it to no more than 2 pages - one is preferred. If you use more than one page, put - MORE - at the bottom of the first page to alert the reporter that another page is coming
- Use 8 1/2 x 11 paper
- Leave ample margins (about 1 inch)
- At the top of the first page, put the name of the school, address, phone number and contact person and the date the release was sent

When it comes to the content of the release, here are a few suggestions:

- Decide the best way to introduce the story - the first paragraph should "hook" your reader. If your event is unique, stress that.
- Be accurate and objective - avoid opinionated statements.
- Try to answer as many questions as you might ask in the role of a reporter.
- Use "everyday" language - avoid bureaucratic jargon. Use proper grammar.
- Be as brief as possible, but make sure to cover the important facts.
- Double-check the spelling of names and all phone numbers listed.
- Proofread, proofread, proofread. Have someone else review your draft.
- Type -30- or -end- or ### at the bottom of the last page.
- If the story is really important, call ahead and tell the reporter the release is on the way. Then follow up with another call.
- Give as much advance notice as possible - about two weeks is best.
- Resend a "reminder" the week of the event.

Remember, your press release is competing with many others for the reporter's time. Use your imagination and be creative.

SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE #1



**PUBLIC RELATIONS &
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT**
600 S.E. Third Avenue, Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33301
www.browardschools.com
754-321-2300 • Fax 754-321-2318

THE SCHOOL BOARD OF BROWARD COUNTY, FLORIDA
Benjamin J. Williams, *Chair* • Ann Murray, *Vice Chair*
Robin Bartleman • Maureen S. Dinnen • Patricia Good
Jennifer Leonard Gottlieb • Laurie Rich Levinson • Nora Rupert
David Thomas, NBCT • Donnie Carter, *Interim Superintendent of Schools*

DATE: (Date release will be sent, not date of the event)

CONTACTS: (Name of contact person(s) and phone number)

SUBJECT: MINI-SPECIAL OLYMPICS TO BE HELD AT DRIFTWOOD MIDDLE SCHOOL

WHO: Over 80 special needs students from five Broward middle schools; Special Olympics of Broward County

WHAT: Mini-Special Olympics

WHEN: Wednesday, May 4, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m. (lunch break 11:30 a.m.-12:10 p.m.)

WHERE: Driftwood Middle School, 2751 N. 70 Terrace, Hollywood

WHY: To bring special needs students together in a competitive spirit; to bring fitness awareness to the special needs population

HOW: Students will take part in track and field events.

ADDITIONAL: Driftwood Middle School and Special Olympics of Broward County are hosting this first, annual event. Schools taking part include Driftwood (Hollywood), Olsen (Dania), Lauderdale Lakes, Falcon Cove (Weston) and Glades (Miramar) middle schools. Driftwood Middle School is a Health & Wellness Magnet School.

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ABOUT BROWARD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Broward County Public Schools (BCPS) is the nation's sixth largest public school system and the largest fully accredited district with nearly 234,000 students in more than 230 schools and education centers. For more information about BCPS, visit (www.browardschools.com). Follow BCPS on Twitter (@Browardschools). Find us on Facebook at (www.facebook.com/browardschools)

SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE #2



PUBLIC RELATIONS & GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT

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DATE: (Date release will be sent, not date of the event)

CONTACT: (Name of contact person(s) and phone number)

SUBJECT: BOYD ANDERSON HIGH SCHOOL TO HOST FIRST ACADEMIC SCHOLARSHIP SIGNING DAY

****EXCELLENT PHOTO OPPORTUNITY****

“Signing Day” isn’t just for athletes in Broward County anymore. **On Wednesday, May 11, 2011, Boyd Anderson High School (3050 NW 41 Street, Lauderdale Lakes) will host its first Academic Scholarship Signing Day to recognize seniors whose commitment to academic excellence has resulted in scholarship offers from colleges and universities.**

Both the students and their families will be honored during a special breakfast (8 a.m.) at the school, followed by a **formal signing ceremony at approximately 8:45 a.m.** During the ceremony, each student will sign his or her name on a scroll, along with the name of the college or university they will attend.

The event is being sponsored in part by College Summit, a national nonprofit organization that partners with schools and districts to strengthen a “college-going culture” and increase college enrollment rates.

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POTENTIAL PITFALLS- LOOK OUT BELOW!

Don't get bullied when talking with a reporter. The following are just some of the approaches reporters take that can make you feel uncertain, defensive, intimidated or just plain angry.

TYPE	EXAMPLE
1. Leading	So, just how bad would you say this catastrophe is?
2. Hostile	Isn't this just another example of how poor the public schools really are?
3. Non-question	This sounds like misconduct.
4. Speculating	Well, the student was on the roof, so do you think this is a suicide attempt?
5. Veiled threat	If you won't give me the information, I'll call the Superintendent's office.
6. Pressure be completed.	Look, I have a 4 o'clock deadline and I can't wait for the investigation to be completed.
7. Hypothetical	If there was a crossing guard, would the accident have happened?
8. Either/or	Was the custodian or the teacher at fault?
9. Tag game	That's not what the police said.
10. Righteous Indignation	Are you refusing to answer the question?



QUICK TIPS

When a reporter calls or shows up at your school, here are some pointers:

- **Don't panic!** There's no reason to panic because a reporter has shown up at your school or is on the phone.
- Take a reporter's call if you can - if not, ask your secretary to find out what the call is about and tell them you will return the call. If it's going to be a while before you call back, **make sure** the reporter knows that.
- Be nice. Remember, you catch more flies with honey than with vinegar.
- Their deadlines are not your deadlines. However, be sure to **RETURN THE CALL** - even if it's your secretary telling them you are unable to call them back due to your schedule. **Ignoring a reporter won't make them go away - it will only make them angry.**
- Think **before** you speak. Remember, you can't un-say something.
- If the subject requires some research, tell them so - they will understand. Again, be sure to return their call - either with the proper information or the name and/or department they should call to get the information.
- You have the final say-so when it comes to your school - what **YOU** say, goes. If you do not want a reporter on campus, then that's that. However, don't use this as a standard response – there must be a reason behind your "no."
- Reporters, like all other visitors, **MUST** follow established rules at your school. They **MUST** check-in at the front office and should not be allowed to roam around without an escort.
- When it comes to students, remember one thing: **NO** student can be interviewed or photographed unless they have a current media release on file that is signed by their parent(s) or guardian giving permission.
- **Never, ever say "no comment."** There are other ways to say "no comment" without saying "no comment." Some examples are:

That isn't something I can discuss now because I don't have all the facts.
I'm really not the best person to talk with about that. You should call (XXXX)
- **DO NOT SPECULATE.** If you do not have the facts about something, don't try to guess. Either take a few minutes to gather the facts, or refer the reporter to the right person.
- **DO NOT ELABORATE.** If you are asked a Yes or No question, give a Yes or No answer.
- There is **NO SUCH THING** as "off the record." This just means you won't be quoted directly, but what you say may still be used in the story. Assume when you are talking with a reporter, you are **always** on the record.

When in doubt, you can always call the **Public Relations & Governmental Affairs Department** - that's what we're here for. The number is **754-321-2300**.



MEDIA CONTACTS

The following are the addresses and general telephone numbers to the main South Florida print and broadcast media. Wherever possible, the phone number listed is that of the education reporter/editor:

PRINT

Sun-Sentinel

200 E. Las Olas Blvd.
Fort Lauderdale 33301
954-356-4527 – Reporter
cdfitzpatrick@sun-sentinel.com

The Herald

1520 E. Sunrise Blvd.
Fort Lauderdale 33304
305-376-3587 – Editor
cpacenti@miamiherald.com

The South Florida Times

PO Box 670038
Coral Springs 33067
954-356-9360 – Editor
ejones@sfltimes.com

Westside Gazette

PO Box 5304
Fort Lauderdale 33310
954-525-1489
wgazette@bellsouth.net

El Nuevo Herald

1 Herald Plaza
Miami 33132
1-800-437-2535
areynaldo@elnuevoherald.com

BROADCAST

WFOR Channel 4 (CBS)

1520 E. Sunrise Blvd.
Fort Lauderdale 33304
954-463-6397
wfornews@wfor.cbs.com

WSVN Channel 7 (FOX)

1020 S. Andrews Ave.
Fort Lauderdale 33316
954-463-2291
newsdesk@wsvn.com

NBC6 (NBC)

15000 SW 27th St.
Miramar 33027
954-622-6111
wtvjdesk@nbc.com

WPLG Channel 10 (ABC)

3401 W. Hallandale Beach Blvd.
Pembroke Park 33023
954-364-2752
newsdesk@wplg.com

Telemundo Channel 51

15000 SW 27th Street
Miramar 33027
954-622-7655
wtvjdesk@nbc.com

Univision Channel 23

9405 NW 41st Street
Doral 33178
305-471-4234
noticias23@univision.net

WIOD 610 (News)

7601 Riviera Blvd.
Miramar 33023
866-521-25-99
wroustan@wplg.com



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Donnie Carter, Interim Superintendent of Schools

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Individuals with disabilities requesting accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act of 2008, (ADAAA) may call Equal Educational Opportunities (EEO) at 754-321-2150 or Teletype Machine (TTY) 754-321-2158.

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