

Tips For Effective Superintendent Interactions With Media Representatives*

A. Get the “facts” (what the reporter says happened)

- Know who is calling.

B. Use good media relations

- Ask for reporter’s deadline
- Set a time to get back to reporter
- Do not ever argue

C. Get your own facts (what your people say happened)

- Answer who, what, where, when, and why
- What else can they tell you (background)?
- What can’t they tell you?

D. Build your story (if you have time)

- Determine a spokesperson
- Develop key messages
- Develop your game plan
- Talk through possible questions and answers

E. Prepare, Prepare, and Prepare

- Keep key messages in front of you
- Be consistent and reinforce those key messages

F. Manage your phone calls and interviews

- Relax! You usually know more than they do.
- Be honest and brief
- Try to meet the reporter’s needs
- Own the interview by getting your key messages out
- Avoid jargon and condescending remarks
- Admit mistakes and problems
- Never, ever speak “off the record”
- Never say, “no comment”
- If you do not know an answer to a question, say so.

G. Follow Up

- Provide addition information as it becomes available
- Correct inaccuracies as soon as you know about them
- Constantly build a working relationship with your media reps.

*Adapted from a presentation by M. Wheeler, Beaverton S.D., S. Knagg Garland S.D., and S. Linders, St. Paul S.D.