

Greenville County Schools



Communicating in an Electronic World
Headliners 2011

Media Coverage

Media-Requested Coverage

Requests for information, interviews (staff and student), photographs/videotape, etc. (except routine coverage of athletics) should be made through the Communications Department. The Communications Department will make arrangements with the appropriate principal. Requests made to schools should generally be channeled to the Communications Department. Principals may reply to media requests for basic information about their schools. Questions pertaining to district programs should be channeled to the Communications Department. If in doubt, refer requests to the Communications Department.

School-Requested Coverage

Schools are encouraged to contact the media to cover events. The principal should approve requests for coverage. If in doubt, contact the Communications Department for consultation. The Communications Department should be notified as a courtesy and/or if coverage is requested in publications, videos, or on The Schools Channel, our cable channel on Charter Communications Channel 99.

General Coverage Guidelines

An item included in the Media Tip Sheet is considered school-requested coverage. The principal should approve all media coverage of school events. Once approved, the reporter should report to the school office. A staff member should accompany the reporter on campus.

Media coverage should not interfere with classroom instruction. (Assembly programs and other activities not involving direct student instruction are exempt from these guidelines.) Classroom photographs and videotape should only be allowed during the first or last five minutes (approximately) of a class. Principal should confer with the classroom teacher and check Student Directory Information Forms before scheduling photographs or videotaping.

Student interviews can only be granted with the approval of the principal and appropriate student. The principal should use discretion. The Communications Department should be contacted and informed of media coverage and/or interviews.

Student Directory Information Form

The parent permission form (Student Directory Information Form) for photographing and videotaping students, which includes an Opt-Out Option, will be discussed with principals in August. Headliners should check with your principal after October 15 for a current list of students who have returned Opt-Out Forms. Last year's forms are in effect until October 15 or unless a parent chooses to opt-out at the beginning of the school year.

The **Media Interview Release Form** (*Infoweb/Downloadable Resources/Communications*) is required for student interviews. Parental permission should be secured for interviews regarding sensitive issues. Principal has discretion.

Please note the media can interview students when they are not under school jurisdiction, without school approval.

Departments

Media requests for information, interviews, etc. should be made through the Communications Department. The Communications Department will contact appropriate staff member for information and/or to arrange interviews. Media requests to staff members should be channeled to the Communications Department for appropriate action.

What Is News?

Any broadcast or printed item that communicates with the public is news, but not everything that happens is newsworthy. If you answer "yes" to these questions, your story is probably newsworthy.

1. Is it new or unusual?
2. Is it a "first?"
3. Is it something that is not available in all school districts or in all schools?
4. Will it affect a large percentage of students?
5. Will it affect a large number of employees in the system?
6. Could it affect the functioning of the school system or the school?
7. Is it something that is happening nationally and will have an impact here?
8. If it is not a new item -- is it time for a progress report?
9. Is it a noteworthy award?
10. Would you stop what you are doing to learn more about it if you saw it on television or the Internet, or heard about it on the radio?

Good Sources of News Stories

- Something no one else is doing
- Award-winning students and staff
- Innovative test preparation activities
- Technology in the classroom
- Activities involving parents and community
- School activity tied to national news, i.e. space shuttle launch, mock election, etc.
- Students helping students
- Athletic achievement
- Unusual hobbies
- Student involvement in the community

Reporting News

As a general rule, school news may be released directly to the media. As a courtesy, please email your news to sclarke@greenville.k12.sc.us. If you'd like to see your school's story on the web or in the local media, email [Susan Clarke](mailto:Susan.Clarke). You may submit staff story ideas for use in an edition of [Enlighten E-news](#), our employee newsletter. Be sure to report the five W's (who, what, when, where, and why) and include a contact name and phone number.

Many media outlets have added sections to their websites where viewers/readers can upload their own photos and news, so don't miss out on this great opportunity.

Timing

Plan your events wisely. Most news departments have skeleton crews on the weekend, and limit them to "hard news" items such as a disaster, accident or some controversy. If your school or department has a weekend event planned, be sure to remind local media the day before via email or telephone.

Some local television stations and some newspaper reporters will cover stories early in the morning, but most news reporters want to cover stories after 9:00 a.m. If you're planning an event after school, WYFF-TV's "John on the Road" might be an appropriate avenue for news coverage. Be sure to submit your request well in advance as his schedule fills quickly.

Know the deadlines and release the story so that all the media will get it at the same time. Do not play favorites.

Do not ask reporters to cover events on an hour's notice. Remember that they work on assignment and need sufficient lead time.

Establish a Relationship

- Get to know the **reporters and editors** that cover your school. If you don't already know them, pick up the phone or send an email to introduce yourself. Invite them to join you for lunch and a tour of your school. This will also provide you and your principal with an excellent opportunity to brief them on your school's educational program.
- Remember that credibility is essential to maintaining successful working relationships with the media. Make absolutely certain that you double check the accuracy of any information you submit to the media.
- Learn all you can about the needs of the news media: operation, deadlines, and services. Read newspapers, listen to the radio, watch local television news programs, and check out the media websites.
- Respond promptly to reporters' requests for information.

Serve the Media Needs

- Keep the media informed about story ideas from your school through email or Media Tip Sheet.
- Don't complain to reporters when they don't cover a story, but be sure to thank them when they do. Don't be disappointed when all your ideas are not used. Remember that you are competing with many other organizations.
- Don't overreact to errors in a news story. Call the reporter and provide him with the correct information so the mistake won't happen again.
- When a reporter does a good job on his story, let him know by sending an email with a copy to his supervisor.
- The reporter works for the newspaper, radio or TV station, not Greenville County Schools. It is not the reporter's job to make the school or the school system look good. That is OUR JOB!
- The reporter or editor may have a different concept of what merits news coverage. The decision to run or not run a story rests ultimately with the editor. If you feel that you are being completely overlooked, discuss the situation with the Communications Coordinator at 355-8874.
- Reporters are professionals; treat them as you would wish to be treated. Help reporters get the story, but don't try to tell them how it should be reported.
- Don't ask to see a story before it is published. This implies that you don't trust the reporter to write an accurate story, and will only serve to create tension. Also, don't ask the reporter to send you copies of an article or script prior to release. Archives of most newspaper articles are kept on Infoweb.
- Remember that reporters do not write headlines. Stories may also be edited or shortened by an editor.
- Don't flood reporters and editors with releases that have no news value. If you do, they will get used to automatically discarding anything you send. Local weekly newspapers are more apt to respond to events such as school carnivals, PTA fundraisers, or Honor Roll lists, for example.

Television Coverage

Think visual. Just watch local or national news, and you will see that the stories have action and interviews. You seldom see footage of just a meeting or a lecture. If your students have made 5,000 calendars for the elderly, allow the media (and Communications, too!) to get "action shots," not just pictures of the finished product.

Have your news event well organized so that the television reporters do not have to spend a lot of time waiting.

When you contact the media, give directions to your school and a contact person, along with phone number and email address.

Prepare a fact sheet with a brief summary of the activity, names and positions of people involved, and pictures if appropriate. You might also add general information about your school, or refer the reporter to your website address.

Photography

The Greenville News and other local newspapers will provide a photographer if the story needs a picture. Weekly newspapers will more readily accept photos you provide. Use your digital camera! You can email photos in the "jpeg" format to Communications and most newspapers along with your story. Please be sure your photos are at least 200 dpi.

How to Prepare a News Release

Here are some suggestions for making your news story appealing to the media.

1. Make sure the information is newsworthy –human interest stories or emotional appeal.
2. Put the most important information first.
3. Communicate with the 5 Ws and the H – who, what, when, where, why, and how.
4. Point out the educational significance of the story.
5. Include information about your school.
6. Be 100% accurate - check and double check the facts.
7. Simplify. In writing, simpler is better.
8. Avoid jargon, big words, extra words, or clichés.
9. Always proofread to eliminate spelling, grammar, or punctuation errors.
10. Provide as much contact information as possible – name(s), address, phone number, email, and website address.

District Publications and Resources

Media Tip Sheet

A [Media Tip Sheet](#) is posted every Tuesday during the school year on the GCS website. Education reporters and editors of local media receive an email from the Communications Department that includes current news and upcoming events.

Enlighten E-News

[Enlighten E-News](#) is for employees and is about employees. This internal employee newsletter features staff news and accomplishments and is posted on the GCS Web Site six times a year. Every full-and part-time permanent employee receives an email when the newsletter has been posted with a direct link. Enlighten E-news features staffs who have gone "above and beyond." Story ideas are always welcomed by contacting [Susan Clarke](#).

The Schools Channel

The Schools Channel broadcasts school and District video programs as well as student-produced videos 24/7 on Charter Communications Channel 99. The Communications Department accepts school videos throughout the entire year. These videos may include (but are not limited to) school plays, concert performances, class projects, public service announcements, video competition entries, athletic or extracurricular events, and media/broadcast class productions. Videos of all lengths are acceptable. All submissions will be reviewed for approval (check copyright, video quality, etc). For questions regarding video production, please contact the Video Production Department at 452-0122 or email jhoffman@greenville.k12.sc.us.

News Releases

The Communications Department routinely prepares News Releases about significant events in Greenville County Schools. They are then sent to our Media Contact list via the Media Tip Sheet or, in the case of special or breaking news, individually.

Contact Communications

Oby G. Lyles, Director of Communications

355-8871

Susan Clarke, Communications Coordinator

355-8874

Leisa Artus, Creative Services Specialist

355-8873

Susan Richards, Secretary

355-8870

Meredith Murray, Videographer

452-0123

Jeff Hoffman, Videographer

452-0122

Media Interview Release Form

The Media Interview Release Form can be found at:

Infoweb/Downloadable Resources/Communications Forms/Media Interview Release Form

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