

# **Guidelines for Charlotte-area media 2011-2012**

## **Introduction:**

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools Communications Department's goal is to provide clear, timely and accurate information about the district. CMS staff believes it is important to be open and accessible to the media in order to ensure the public effectively understands district functions and goals.

Communications staff is available to coordinate news coverage with local media, arrange staff interviews and provide responses to requests for information. There are two media relations specialists and a dedicated media line to assist local and national media with its requests. The media line, 980-343-6243, is staffed during normal CMS office hours. Calling the media line is the best and fastest way for media to receive a response to requests.

## **Contacting CMS employees:**

CMS is always open and accessible to the local media. Reporters, editors or producers are allowed to call any CMS staff member at any time to ask questions about a story – positive or negative. This includes principals, assistant principals, coaches, teachers and other staff members. CMS employees do not have to speak to the media and may choose not to. Again, the best way to set up an interview or receive information is to call the media line at 980-343-6243.

## **Access to CMS schools:**

Media relations specialists work with all schools and departments to provide a variety of positive and hardnews stories. Story ideas are shared through the weekly media tip sheet, which is emailed out to all local media outlets each Monday; news releases, which are emailed on an as-needed basis, and the CMS website, which is updated daily. Events that are listed on the weekly media tip sheet, in a news release or on the website are available for coverage. Media does not need advance permission to go to CMS schools or other buildings to cover these stories at the listed time and date. Those locations have been cleared with the principal ahead of time.

**For other stories or inquiries, the media is not allowed to go to CMS schools without permission from the principal and/or communications department. Members of the media who appear at a school without prior permission will be asked to leave immediately.**

## **Crisis communication:**

A principal's priority in a crisis is to work with students, staff and parents. The CMS communications department and media relations specialists will coordinate media coverage in any crisis. Media will be updated through phone calls and emails. Please do not call a school directly during a crisis; phone lines at schools need to be open for staff to communicate with parents. Call the CMS media line at 980-343-6243 for the latest updated information. If the situation warrants it, media relations specialists will be on-location at schools to coordinate the release of information. Please adhere to police and/or staff instructions for parking and any other access during a crisis.

## **Key Phone Numbers:**

CMS Media Line: 980-343-6243

LaTarzja Henry, Executive Director for Communications: 980-344-0009

Tahira Stalberte, Director of Communications: 980-343-0954

Kasia Thompson, Media Relations Specialist: 980-343-1140

Stacy Sneed, Media Relations Specialist: 980-343-1081