



COMMUNICATION BRIEF

Media Relations

The media can be an important resource for circulating information about language and literacy research. Media professionals work on tight deadlines, so preparation will help ensure your information is transmitted successfully. The first step is to prepare a media release which summarizes your message. If your release is picked up, you will be contacted for a media interview which is your chance to share your findings and educate the public about the important research and developments of the Canadian Language and Literacy Research Network. Using the following tips and suggestions for media relations can make the process comfortable and successful.

Developing a Media Release

- ◆ It is important that your media release contain a clear message that is of interest to the public. Since media outlets receive hundreds of releases each day from companies and individuals seeking media attention, yours needs to stand out.
- ◆ When drafting your message, try to focus or stress the human angle of the research — what is the research doing for children, the community and society?
- ◆ It is very helpful if you have someone with media experience help you finalize the wording for your media release and advise you on the best way to send it, what publications should be targeted, and the ideal timing for release. The Network's communications department, or your institution's public affairs department are available to assist with this and can help schedule interviews.

Preparing for Media Contact

- ◆ Respond to media calls as quickly as possible. Reporters have more time to devote to interviews earlier in the day, so try to schedule your interviews accordingly to help ensure correct uptake of your message.
- ◆ If a reporter calls you by phone and catches you off-guard, tell them you are busy at the moment and arrange to call them back at a specified time, depending on their deadline. Be sure to ask them what they want to discuss by explaining that you want to make sure you have all the information you'll need on hand.
- ◆ Select two or three important or key messages that you want the media and the public to understand. Write them in short, clear sentences and be prepared to use them.
- ◆ Formulate a list of possible questions that the media may want you to address. Have answers for these questions prepared and ready to use at the interview.
- ◆ Get to know your media. Before the interview, determine whether the interview will be distributed through publication or broadcast and be sure you understand the audiences and the deadlines of the particular media.



COMMUNICATION BRIEF

Media Relations, Continued

Media Interviews

Being interviewed by the media can be stressful but if you are well prepared, it can be exciting and very successful. Once the media selects your story for follow up, the reporter is motivated to make the story work since his or her editor will be expecting an article or broadcast story to be completed. Here are some tips to help you make the most of the opportunity.

During an Interview

- ◆ Speak in plain language and do not assume that the media or the public have any prior knowledge about the research subject.
- ◆ Avoid using jargon or acronyms that the journalist or public may not recognize.
- ◆ Be quotable. Give information briefly, clearly and directly.
- ◆ If you are unsure that the journalist has understood your message, ask him/her to repeat what you have said.
- ◆ There is no such thing as “going off the record.” It is better to assume that everything that is said to the reporter can be used as quotes and sound bites.
- ◆ Answer the reporter’s questions but make an attempt to link them to your own key messages whenever possible.
- ◆ Always provide explanations and context. Speak at a Grade 7 level—just because you know the issue doesn’t mean everyone else does. Give background briefings and materials to a journalist so that he/she understands the research and the organization you represent.
- ◆ Always tell the truth.
- ◆ If you do not know an answer, admit it. Offer to find the answer and then follow up with the reporter by providing the information as soon as possible.
- ◆ Never answer a hypothetical “what if” question. Stick to the facts.
- ◆ If you’re asked about a problem, talk about a solution. Keep your answers positive and results-driven.
- ◆ Focus on the current success and the future goals of the organization and research opportunities, in order to generate enthusiasm for research and funding support.