

Cultivating connections:

Tools, tips and
techniques for
working with the
media





Some transcendent truths about media

- All news is local - look for local ways to tell global stories
- Develop relationships with reporters, editors and bloggers
- Develop deep knowledge about various media outlets in your communities

What will make the media tune in?

Is it:

- new research (show, not tell), especially if it debunks pre-existing myths or sheds new insights
- Find students, teachers and parents to illustrate research or new findings
- Importance
- Proximity
- Relevance
- Currency
- Uniqueness
- Surprise
- Celebrity
- Controversy
- Strong Visuals



Rapidly transforming media landscape globally

- With media convergence, fewer multinational companies own more media outlets
- Up side - more citizen journalism, flourishing of blogs and niche publications, web sites, newspapers, radio and tv stations.



What has stayed the same?

No matter what outlet, good stories will always need to be told, whether online, in print or on radio or television


Ongoing need for human connections

Other media enticements

- Children always “sell” a story
- Have compelling visuals or action to entice media, especially with more convergence and multi-media integration
- Look for trends and ways to tell stories about those trends

Visuals make great stories

- Example of video news feature, becoming more common as a standard way to share news online:
- http://news-releases.uiowa.edu/2008/april/041108inventiowa_video.html



New research or major reports with substantive findings:

- Release of "A Nation Deceived" report in 2004 garnered worldwide attention
- Had major impact on state of gifted education in the U.S.
- Dispelled myths about gifted education

Perseverance and patience will pay off

- If at first you don't succeed, try, try again (many circumstances can derail or detract from an otherwise good story such as natural disasters, political upheaval or other breaking news.)

Specifics to getting the word out

- Stress impact to general public on schools, students, improvements in learning outcomes, etc.
- Answer who, what, when, where and why
- Make news understandable to public; avoid excessive scholarly language, jargon or acronyms such as NTGA
- State when key people are available for interviews
- Provide photos or pie charts, graphs, if appropriate

Alternate avenues

- Blogs
- Listserves for professionals, faculty, interest groups
- Newsletters
- Web pages publications/magazines
- Talks/presentations
- Paid advertisement

When reporters call....

- Cold calls (politely ask to call back)
- Understand story (context, deadline)
- DON'T be pressured
- DO be friendly, helpful and proactive

Tips for successful interview

- Set time limit
- Talking points
- Relax
- Avoid jargon
- Silence is OK
- Confusing questions
- Say reporter's name
- Build bridges
- Repeat, repeat, repeat



Things to avoid during interviews

- Off-the-record, on background
- Lies, fibs, or denials
- Speculation
- “No comment”

End on a positive note

- Thank reporter
- Offer to answer questions later
- Provide after-hours phone numbers (home, cell) or another way to contact

After the story comes out

- Happy with the article? Call to thank reporter
- Unhappy? Ask impartial reader for opinion
- Factual errors vs. nuance errors
- Requesting corrections, clarifications

After you return home

- Offer to write guest column for newspaper or contact opinion page editor;
- Offer to participate in a radio program, looking at issues happening in your communities and local schools related to gifted education;
- At your university, update information online and/or with a faculty expert database;
- Be a citizen journalist, contribute to a blog;
- Identify students, parents or educators who can share first-person perspectives on their experiences with acceleration or gifted education.



Contact me with feedback
or questions. I want to
hear about your
experiences!

- Lois J. Gray, University of Iowa
News Services, [lois-
gray@uiowa.edu](mailto:lois-gray@uiowa.edu)
319-384-0077
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