



DIOCESE of
FORT WAYNE - SOUTH BEND
SECRETARIAT for COMMUNICATIONS

Media Guidelines for Schools

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The Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend Secretariat for Communications is available to help Catholic schools communicate clearly, confidently, and effectively with the media—whether responding to an unexpected situation or proactively sharing a positive story.

Our goal is to support school leaders with professional communications expertise while helping ensure that information shared publicly is accurate, timely, and consistent with the mission of the Church.

When a Crisis or Emergency Occurs:

The Catholic Schools Office Educational Policies establish the process schools should follow in an emergency or crisis.

Policy 1510: In times of emergency or crisis, the school principal shall immediately notify the Catholic Schools Office as soon as possible. Emergency or crisis includes, but is not limited to, life-threatening situations, matters of health and safety of students and/or staff, and matters of potential lawsuit. The principal, in consultation with the Catholic Schools Office, shall communicate the situation to the Diocesan Office of Communications. Additionally, all plans relating to school safety shall contain responsibilities and procedures for communicating, in time of crisis, to all additional stakeholders as needed (parents, media, etc.).

In these situations, the Catholic Schools Office and Secretariat for Communications will work together with school leadership so that the school can focus on responding to the situation itself while receiving support for the communications surrounding it.

How the Communications Team Can Help:

Depending on the circumstances, the Secretariat for Communications can provide:

- **Communications strategy:** Help determine what needs to be communicated, to whom, when, and through which channels.
- **Parent and community communications:** Draft or review letters, emails, FAQs, website notices, and other updates for school families.
- **Media statements:** Prepare clear, factual statements that can be provided to reporters or published publicly.

- **Responses to media inquiries:** Work directly with reporters when appropriate or help school leadership prepare a response.
- **Interview preparation:** Develop talking points, anticipate likely questions, and prepare principals, pastors, teachers, coaches, or other representatives for interviews.
- **Spokesperson support:** Help determine who is best positioned to speak publicly on behalf of the school or Diocese.
- **Ongoing updates:** Help establish a communications plan when a situation develops over several hours or days and requires multiple updates.
- **Media monitoring and corrections:** Monitor coverage and assist when published or broadcast information requires clarification or correction.
- **Positive media relations:** Help identify stories that may be of interest to local media, pitch stories, coordinate interviews, and amplify positive coverage through diocesan channels.

When a Reporter Contacts Your School:

Catholic Schools Office **Policy 2010** provides the following procedure for media inquiries for non-crisis situations:

Media inquiries to any parish or agency in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend should be facilitated as follows:

1. Secure the name of the inquirer, the medium represented, the subject matter of the inquiry, the inquirer's telephone number and deadline.
2. Direct this information immediately to the Communications Office.

Receiving a media inquiry does not mean that someone at the school needs to answer questions immediately. It is perfectly appropriate to thank the reporter, collect the information above, and explain that someone will follow up.

The Communications Team can then work with the school and Catholic Schools Office, as appropriate, to determine the best response.

Routine and Positive Media Opportunities:

Not every interaction with the media is a crisis. Local media coverage can provide an important opportunity to share the good work of our Catholic schools and demonstrate the value of Catholic education in our communities.

For routine or positive stories—such as a new school initiative, student achievement, community service project, special event, or education-related story—schools are encouraged to contact the Secretariat for Communications directly. We can help determine whether there is an opportunity for media coverage and assist with outreach, messaging, and interview preparation.

Athletics

Routine athletics coverage, including post-game interviews, championship coverage, athlete features, and coach interviews, does not require prior diocesan approval.

Schools are encouraged to make the Communications Team aware of significant athletics features or interviews so that we can help amplify positive coverage and provide support if broader media attention develops.

Coaches, athletic directors, and student-athletes should be prepared not only to speak about athletic performance, but also to articulate the role that Catholic education, faith, character, and formation play in their experience.

A Few Principles for Media Interviews:

When speaking with the media:

- Share confirmed facts; do not speculate or speak beyond what you know.
- Remember that anything said to a reporter should generally be considered public and attributable.
- Protect the privacy of students, families, and employees.
- Do not feel pressured to respond immediately simply because a reporter has a deadline.
- Be courteous and helpful, even when declining to answer a particular question.
- Look for appropriate opportunities to communicate the mission and values of Catholic education.

The Secretariat for Communications is available to help you prepare before an interview or media interaction.

Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend Communications Contact:

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Secretary for Communications

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(260) 363-3831 – office

(574) 993-3243 – cell

When a school becomes aware of a crisis situation, the Catholic Schools Office should be the school's first diocesan point of contact.

Primary contact for crisis situations:

David Maugel, Superintendent of Schools

(260) 215-1041 – cell | dmaugel@diocesefwsb.org