

PTA Leader Media Tips

PTA leaders are often approached by the media to be interviewed for both written articles and on-air segments. Not all media opportunities make sense for PTA to participate in. Feel free to reach out to the ACCPTA President for assistance before speaking with the media: president@accpta.org. ACCPTA can help you consider if the opportunity makes sense, as well as with rehearsing talking points.

Each opportunity should be carefully considered based on the following criteria:

1. Does PTA have a clear position about the topic? ACCPTA can help identify PTA positions to assist with this. You can also reference:
 - a. [Florida PTA Position Statements](#)
 - b. [National PTA Position Statements](#)
 - c. [More information about PTA advocacy](#)
2. Does your PTA feel comfortable speaking about the topic? Even though you don't need permission to speak on a topic as long as it follows PTA positions (see above), you might want to run it by your board and your principal, just to make sure they don't feel it will put the school in a difficult situation.
3. Is the topic controversial? Will speaking about it publicly stir up negative emotions or cause a divide within your school community or the broader community?
4. Is the topic specific to your school, or does it have broader, community-wide implications? If it's a broader topic, it might make sense to defer to ACCPTA for a response.

If you do decide to speak with the media, the following tips might help you focus your responses and ensure goodwill with the community.

1. Develop a mutual understanding with the reporter about whether you are speaking as a representative of PTA or not. This will make a difference in what you are at liberty to say, as well as help you formulate your responses. It's a good idea to establish this in advance of the interview to allow time to properly prepare.
 - a. If you are not representing PTA, you do not have to follow PTA positions. However, keep in mind that there are many in the community who will associate you with PTA even if your PTA title isn't mentioned in the article. For that reason, it's a good idea to carefully consider your responses with regards to PTA positions so that you don't put the organization in a difficult position. This is especially true for PTA presidents. You should also remind the reporter during the interview that PTA should not be associated with your comments in the article.
 - b. If you are representing PTA, it's important to speak with one voice (remember our motto: *Every Child, One Voice*). This is accomplished through positions at the national, state and district levels (see above). ACCPTA is familiar with the positions and can help you find them as well as assist you with formulating responses if needed. When representing PTA, it's also important to think about how your responses will come across to the public. Relationships are important to PTA's success, so nothing should be said through the media that would jeopardize these (see examples below).

2. Gather as much information as possible in advance of the interview. At the very least, the reporter should be able to provide the specific topic/angle of the article and why you were contacted for the interview. Ask them for a list of questions in advance as well. They might ask follow-up questions during the interview, but at least having the high-level questions will help you prepare.
3. Ask the reporter about the intent of their report. Will it be aired in an interview format? Is it going to be written up as an article? When and how would the finished product be accessed (news source, date of publication, etc.)?
4. Ask if the interview will be recorded. You do not have to provide permission to record if you are not comfortable with it. The plus side to recording is if you are misquoted, there will be proof of what you said. The downside is that it might make you feel more apprehensive.
5. Develop talking points in advance. Reporters are usually looking for brief, quotable sound bites. It's helpful to develop some of these to make it easy for them to get the information they need. This will also make it more likely that you will be quoted.
6. Don't feel obligated to answer all of the reporter's questions. If you don't know the answer or are not comfortable responding, you can politely decline. You can also feel free to refer the reporter to ACCPTA.
7. Ask the reporter to run direct quotes by you before publishing. Many of them aren't able to do this, but it's worth asking just to make sure there is a mutual understanding about what was said.
8. Ask the reporter for their deadline. This may determine if you are able to participate, and/or help you prioritize.
9. Be yourself. This may feel somewhat contradictory given all of the points made above, but it's important to relax and try to use the experience as an opportunity to promote the good work PTA is doing. Some reporters are better than others at making interviewees feel at ease. Be prepared for this, and go into the experience knowing that you have a lot to offer – that's why they contacted you!