



Standard Operating Procedures for Communications Department

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MEDIA

Media Coverage: Press Releases/Media Advisories

Communications curates the stories in our District to showcase the great work happening in our schools and programs. The team creates and distributes press releases and media advisories to local news media to communicate District and school-level news and events. Requests for media coverage should be made five days in advance of the event/program.

- Requests for media coverage should be made five days in advance of the event/program.
- Content must be provided by the requester and sent to Communications for approval.
- Once approved, Communications develops press releases/media advisory.
- Media advisories are typically sent two days in advance of the event.
- A member of the team will be at the event for media support, as needed.

Media Inquiries

Communications **must** approve any media request to visit a school building/facility and/or interview employees.

- If staff members are contacted by the media, please contact the Communications Department right away.
- Request will be approved or denied.
- Messaging will be developed as appropriate for the interview.
- **For the media:** It is a long-standing protocol: all media inquiries must be directed to the Communications Department. This applies to all media coverage involving students, staff, and/or schools. If the media wishes to speak with District staff, these requests must be routed through the Communications Department for review and approval. Staff members directly contacted by the media are required to inform the Communications Department. They should not speak to the media unless authorized by the Chief of Communications or their designee.

Press Conferences

Communications organizes press conferences at the District and school levels.

- If time allows, Communications notifies the news media two days in advance of the press conference.
- Communications works with the building-level Principal to select a venue at the school site.
- Communications supports and/or leverages building-level support for audio/visual and other logistical needs (chairs, podium, sound system, easels, creation of flyers, posters, etc.).
- Building level support may be required for large-scale press conferences, such as ribbon cuttings and/or special events (logistics contacting various dignitaries, sending invitations, coordination of food/beverages, etc.).

INTERNAL/EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

Weather-Related Emergencies

Communications prepares, translates, records, and distributes Districtwide communication (email, robocalls, texts, website posts, and social media) in the event of a weather-related emergency.

- Communications executes robocalls, texts, and emails to families and staff.
- Communications posts on-screen alert and banner on the website.
- Communications shares on social media (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram) and creates an automated response via Facebook related to school closings.
- The Chief of Communications notifies local media per each outlet's individual reporting procedures.

School Emergencies

In the event of a Districtwide or building-level emergency, Communications will coordinate appropriate release of information to students, families, staff, the community, and the media when applicable.

Please see the Emergency Communications Guidelines, Appendix A, for detailed information.

Family Communications

Communications prepares, translates, and records mass communication (letters, emails, robocall, and/or text) both Districtwide and to specific groups (grade levels, schools, etc.).

- Requester provides content to Communications for a Districtwide communication at least five days in advance to ensure translation in the top five languages.
- Content must be vetted through the appropriate Executive Cabinet member(s) and department head(s).
- Additional time may be required to prepare a custom student/employee call group.
- Communications drafts scripts for emails, letters, and robocalls and submits them to requester for approval.
- Communications executes robocalls, emails, and texts to families.
- Robocalls may be recorded by the requester if they choose, or the message will be recorded by a member of the Communications team.
- It takes approximately 60 minutes to complete a robocall to the entire District in the top five languages.

All Staff Communications

Communications prepares and distributes emails, texts, and robocalls to staff when it is necessary to send Districtwide communications.

- Requester provides content to Communications for a Districtwide communication at least three days in advance. Content must be vetted through the appropriate Executive Cabinet member(s) and department head(s).
- Communications drafts scripts for emails and robocalls and submits them to requesters for approval.
- Communications sends all staff emails and robocalls. Texting will be utilized as appropriate.
- Robocalls may be recorded by the requester if they choose, or the message will be recorded by a member of the Communications team.

Staff Announcements for Executive Cabinet, Principals, and Executive Directors

Communications prepares and distributes a District Brief to all staff and prepares a news release announcement when appropriate.

- Employee biography and headshot provided by Human Capital at least one week in advance of the announcement. (Please see Photography Request-Headshots.)
- Communications creates announcements for email and social media.
- Communications schedules announcements to go out on a designated date with social media posts following.

Translations

Communications translators process Arabic, Nepali, Somali, and Spanish translation requests for the Superintendent, Central Office departments, and some non-curriculum school-based communications to families. Document translation requests can be submitted via Google. Interpretation services can be requested via www.RCSDK12.org/BEWL.

Documents with less than 500 words 3-5 days, 500-1,000 words 5-7 days, 1,001- 3,000 words 7-10 days, 3,001-5,000 words 10-15 days. Projects over 5,000 words require approval by the Chief of Communications. **Please refer to Translation Guidelines - Appendix B.**

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Branding

Communications creates all branding for schools, programs, and departments. This includes logos, website design, letterhead, business cards, flyers, etc. All branding is done internally and not outsourced without prior discussion with the Communications team.

- Branding changes must be vetted through the appropriate Executive Cabinet member and department head and approved by the Chief of Communications prior to any changes being made.
- Communications meets with the requester to discuss needed items.
- Communications creates items for requester approval.
- Upon design completion, the requester submits the print order to the District print shop.

Also, see Website Development and Social Media sections for more details.

Logos

Communications creates all logos for schools, programs, and departments. All logos must adhere to the RCSD Branding Guidelines with the exception of schools. Schools must adhere to their own brand guidelines.

- Request for a new or updated logo must be vetted through the appropriate Executive Cabinet member and department head and approved by the Chief of Communications prior to any changes being made.
- Upon approval, a meeting is scheduled to discuss the details and timeline of the request.

- Communications creates several design concepts and sends them back to the requester for review.
- Revisions are made and a final logo is supplied back to the requester.
- Graphic creations may take up to three weeks.

Districtwide Publications

Communications prepares a design and layout suitable for printing and online posting; content must be provided by the department requesting the flyer. All Districtwide family communication must be translated into the top five languages.

- Finalized content, including full text for the flyer, is required at least two weeks in advance of the due date, ideally four weeks prior to the event to ensure translation in the top five languages.
- Communications creates the flyer with design and content and sends to the requester based on a timeline determined at the time of the request. Timeline for completion varies due to the scope of work.
- Requester reviews the flyer and approves or requests revisions.
- Upon approval, final flyer is shared via appropriate channels.
- Two weeks is required at minimum to advertise an event via robocalls, texts, emails, and social media.

WEBSITE

Website Development

Communications works with staff to create websites/pages as requested for specific needs. Website build, initial content upload, and layout is done by Communications. Timeline for completion varies due to the scope of work.

- Communications meets with department/team requester to discuss look, feel, and organization of the site/page.
- Schools/programs/departments will manage all information and updates. Communications staff will provide the training.
- Support and guidance with sites/pages can be solicited via a helpdesk ticket through RoConnect.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social Media

Communications manages and posts content for the District's Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn pages. Information is to be provided at least one week in advance of the posting date.

- Content, including full text and/or images for the post, is submitted to Communications for review and final determination.
- Communications will determine what content is posted on the District's primary accounts and/or posted from the school/program/department and shared by the District's social media.

- Communications manages the creation of new social media accounts for individual schools.
- Timeline varies due to the scope of work.
- Updates to existing sites with content provided can be made within one to two business days if they are not extensive.
- Communications executes training to ensure the school/program/department can manage all information and updates going forward. Training opportunities for social media usually result in a one-hour meeting with follow-up as needed.
- While Communications stays as an administrator on these pages, they do not manage the pages for schools/departments/programs.

TECHNICAL SUPPORT

Video Production

Communications works with schools and departments to help prepare concepts and scripting, provide guidance on imagery, and edit informational videos.

- Full process may require several weeks, depending on the length of the video and the scope of filming/editing necessary.
- Departments/schools/programs initiate a meeting with Communications to establish a completion timeline.
- Production dates are scheduled to capture video footage.
- Video is edited and provided to the requester for review and approval.
- Requests must be vetted through the appropriate Executive Cabinet member and department head and approved by the Chief of Communications.

School-Based Events

Communications assists with audio-visual equipment needs for school-based events, as well as assists with scheduling, set-up, hosting, recording, and streaming to YouTube.

- Initial meetings should occur at least one month prior to the event to establish technical support, assess equipment needs, participants, presentation, supporting media, and robocall/email/social media/website promotion. Time must be allotted for equipment drop-off, set-up, and clean-up.
- Secure storage locations must be provided, as needed.
- Event support from school personnel is required.
- If the schedule does not allow for the Communications team to provide direct support for a live event, best efforts will be made to ensure the requesting department/school is provided with the resources to host the event.

Photography Requests: Events

Communications takes photographs at school/department events by request. Due to the high number of requests, a photographer is not guaranteed.

- Request for photographs at an event must be made at least two weeks prior to the event, based upon the availability of the Communications team photographer.
- Communications provides photographs via Google Drive. Timeline varies due to the scope of work.

Communications takes headshots of new and existing employees.

- Human Capital coordinates with Communications to determine the date and time for new employee's headshots.
- Headshots are scheduled with the District photographer and will be provided in digital format.
- The headshot becomes the official District photo and will be used for all publications. Please note, no filters will be used.

TECHNICAL TRAININGS

School Messenger (robocall, email, text) Training

Communications administers school-based training on the process of preparing, recording, and sending mass communications using School Messenger.

- Training must be arranged with Communications staff for one-hour time slots, as needed.

Website Training

Communications provides initial training to ensure department and school websites are up and running. Departments and schools are also trained to manage the content on their websites.

- Training is scheduled for approximately one hour.
- The expectation is that each department and school have more than one person trained to manage and update their websites as needed. Communications may assist with additional resources and training, as needed.

Social Media Training

Communications provides training to departments, schools, and programs on the proper use of social media, which includes account setup, password maintenance, and assistance with questions.

- Departments/schools/programs initiate a meeting with Communications, where the need for the tools is assessed. Communications schedules time to set up accounts and train staff.
- The expectation is that staff from the departments/schools/programs will manage the accounts, and Communications must have access to them.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION LAW (FOIL) REQUESTS

The Chief of Communications is the District's Records Access Officer. Communications receives and logs all FOIL requests and determines which department/party is responsible for providing the response data.

- FOIL requests are processed as they are received. The law requires a five-day acknowledgment, with fulfillment due no later than 20 days from receipt, unless an extension is granted.

Please refer to FOIL Guidelines, Appendix C.



Appendix A



Emergency Communications Guidelines

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The Rochester City School District has several procedures in place when making timely communications with its staff, students, families, and the public during emergencies. These resources may be used as needed depending on the emergency situation.

Communicating is critically important during an emergency at a school, whether the emergency is as minor as an electrical outage or as major as a school shooting. It is imperative to provide accurate, effective, and timely communication to students, staff, and families. This will help reduce panic, decrease rumors, and promote confidence in the school's/District's ability to manage an emergency and work toward keeping students safe.

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CHECKLIST FOR SCHOOL EMERGENCY COMMS.

1. Call the District Office. When an emergency occurs at a school, the Principal or their designee should immediately inform the Safety and Security Office and School Chief. Stay in close communication throughout the emergency. Communications will work with the Safety and Security Office to put out an emergency message via robocall, on the District website, issue a media statement, and share on social media, as needed.

2. Refer Media Calls to the Communications Department. This is District protocol for all media coverage of schools, not just emergency situations. The Communications Department will always request permission from the school Principal before scheduling a media visit to a school. Staff members should not speak to any member of the media unless requested to do so by the Chief of Communications or their designee.

Depending on the emergency, School Principals may do the following as needed:

- Communicate with Staff. Communicate key information with staff. Give regular updates to staff and students as appropriate. Hold a staff meeting immediately after school or as soon as feasible after the incident. In addition, other means to communicate with staff include sending a robocall and/or email.
- Communicate with Families. Send a robocall to families as soon as possible. In cases where the Principal and/or secretary are busy managing the situation in the building, Communications may assist with the robocall. Mail or backpack a parent letter home the same day if appropriate and possible. Communications may help to write robocalls and letters, or you may write these using the samples provided by Communications. Robocalls and letters MUST be reviewed/approved by the Director of Security, School Chief, and Chief of Communications before being sent.
- Communicate with Students. Students will often communicate with parents/guardians using cell phones and social media sites during emergencies. Since this is almost impossible to prevent, you may decide to reduce misinformation by proactively distributing a short message to students so they share the accurate message you would like to convey.

COMMUNICATING WITH THE MEDIA

For all school emergencies, and even in non-emergency situations, do not speak to any member of the media unless requested to do so by the Chief of Communications or their designee.

1. Reporters do not have the right to be on your campus without permission. They can, however, broadcast from the sidewalk or across the street.
2. Do not allow the media to interview your students or staff.
3. If approached by a member of the media, say, "A District spokesperson will be commenting on the situation."

4. Refer all media inquiries and requests to the Chief of Communications.
5. The Communications Department will designate a spokesperson for the emergency who will give regular updates to the media. The spokesperson will release only information approved by the Rochester Police Department, in instances when they are involved.
6. Remember that students have legal privacy rights and school staff should not discuss the concerns of a student with any unauthorized person.

If you are asked by the Superintendent or Chief of Communications to speak to reporters during an emergency, the following guidelines may be helpful:

- Identify and maintain the message you want to convey and be consistent throughout all communications.
- Be direct and clear, but not simplistic. Use plain language.
- Stay on topic and do not give out unnecessary information or speak of matters unfamiliar to you. Remember privacy laws.
- Be calm and reassuring, but never underestimate the incident.
- Do not speculate, blame, or admit fault. Do not say, “I’m sorry” or be argumentative.
- Reiterate steps being taken to secure and contain the incident.
- It is best to read from, or refer to, a prepared statement than to improvise.
- Do not say, “No comment” to a reporter on any question you are not comfortable answering. Instead, depending on the situation, say:
 - “I don’t have that information, but I will look into it.” – OR –
 - “I cannot answer that question because it involves legal, contractual, or confidential matters.” – OR –
 - “I don’t know the answer to that question, but you are welcome to contact the Communications Department.”

SAMPLE COMMUNICATIONS

Sample Letter: Lockout for Threatening Situation Outside of the Building

During an emergency at your school, providing accurate, effective, and timely communication will help reduce panic, decrease rumors, and promote confidence in your school’s ability to manage an emergency and work toward keeping students safe. If possible and appropriate, the letter should be sent home the same day as the event. The letter **MUST** be reviewed and approved by the Director of Security, School Chief, and Chief of Communications Officer sent.

Sample Parent Letter (on school letterhead)

Date

Dear Families,

I want to make you aware of a situation that took place today at school. Around 10:30 a.m., the Rochester Police Department informed us that they were searching for a criminal suspect in the area, and they told us he could be dangerous.

We immediately announced a lockdown, bringing all outside activity indoors and locking doors and windows. All students were accounted for and classroom instruction continued as usual. Within the hour, the police informed us that the suspect had been apprehended, and we called an “all clear” on the lockdown.

We take student safety seriously at (insert school name), and I am pleased that staff and students quickly followed the procedures outlined in our Emergency Plan.

If you have any questions or concerns about this incident, please feel free to call me at (insert phone).

Sincerely,

Signature

Name

Title

Considerations

- Always use your school or District letterhead.
- Briefly explain the emergency.
- Explain school’s response to the emergency.
- Tell parents what they can do to help their children after the emergency and where to call for more information.
- Remember privacy laws and police investigation constraints.
- Provide a closing that is comforting and positive.
- Always sign the letter.
- Include your name, title and contact phone number.
- Send the letter to the Director of Security, School Chief, and Chief of Communications for review and approval before sending.
- Translate into Spanish as appropriate.

Sample Robocall: Lockout for Threatening Situation Outside of the Building

This is Principal (insert name) with a message for families of students at (insert school name).

First, I want to let you know that all children are safe. However, because of police activity in the neighborhood, the school is in a lockout. This means that classes are taking place normally, but all children were brought inside the building and exterior doors are secured and being monitored.

This is a precautionary measure to ensure the safety of your children. I will provide an update when the lockout is lifted. Thank you.

This is Principal (insert name) with a message for families of students at (insert school name).

First, I want to let you know that all children are safe. However, because of police activity in the neighborhood, the school was in a brief lockout this morning/afternoon. Children remained inside of the building and classes took place normally.

This was only a precautionary measure to ensure the safety of your children. The lockout lasted less than XX minutes while police ensured the neighborhood was safe. Thank you for your understanding.

Sample Robocall: Lockdown for Threatening Situation Inside of the Building

This is Principal (insert name) with a message for families of students at (insert school name).

I am calling to let you to know that our school is currently in lockdown because of a reported threat that the Rochester Police Department and District Safety and Security team are investigating. Students are safe and in their classrooms, and no one will be allowed to enter or exit the building.

I will send another message when the lockdown is lifted and families can again enter the school building. Thank you for your understanding.

This is Principal (insert name) with a follow-up message for families of students at (insert school name).

The lockdown at (insert school name) has been lifted, and all children are safe. The reported threat has been fully investigated, and it turned out to be a false alarm.

School activities are resuming normally and dismissal will take place at the usual time today. Thank you for your understanding.

Sample Robocall: Lockout for School Fighting

This is Principal (insert name) with a message for families of students at (insert school name).

I am calling to let you know that there was an altercation at our school today involving several students. We chose to take precautionary measures and put the school in lockout.

The District Safety and Security team was on hand, and the Rochester police were called. The lockout lasted less than (insert time), and appropriate disciplinary action is being taken. School activities resumed normally, and dismissal took place as usual today.

Please use this opportunity to remind your children that aggressive behavior is never an acceptable way to resolve a conflict and will not be tolerated at school. The safety of your children is our first concern, so please do not hesitate to call me with any questions at (insert phone). Thank you.

Sample Robocall: School Fighting

This is Principal (insert name) with a message for families of students at (insert school name). I am calling about an incident that happened at school today.

A confrontation between two students in a hallway escalated into a fight involving a group of students. Adults quickly intervened to stop the fighting. The students involved were isolated, and their families have been contacted. One student has been taken to the hospital with what appeared to be a possible concussion.

Please use this opportunity to remind your children that aggressive behavior is never an acceptable way to resolve a conflict and will not be tolerated at school. The safety of your children is our first concern, so please do not hesitate to call me with any questions at (insert phone). Thank you.

Sample Robocall: Lockout for Weapon

This is Principal (insert name) with a message for families of students at (insert school name).

I am calling to let you know that our school was in a lockout this morning/afternoon because one of our students indicated they placed a weapon outside our school building. The lockout lasted less than xx minutes, and all students are safe.

The lockout was a precautionary measure to ensure the safety of our students. We are working with the Rochester Police Department to investigate this matter. School activities resumed normally and dismissal took place as usual today.

The safety of your children is our first concern, so please do not hesitate to call me with any questions at (insert phone). Thank you.

Sample Letter: Weapon at School (to be printed on school letterhead)

Dear Families,

I am writing to let you know that one of your child's classmates brought a BB gun to school today. The student did not use it to threaten another child, but some of the students did see it.

No child was ever in danger; however, this may have been unsettling for some students.

Please use this opportunity to remind your children that only school-related items should be brought to school. Also, please reinforce with your child the message that they should always tell an adult at school if they see a student doing something that might hurt themselves or another student.

The safety of your children is our first concern. If you or your child has questions about today's events, please do not hesitate to call me at (insert phone).

Sincerely,
Signature
Name
Title

Considerations

- Always use your school or District letterhead.
- Briefly explain the emergency.
- Explain school's response to the emergency.
- Tell parents what they can do to help their children after the emergency and where to call for more information.
- Remember privacy laws and police investigation constraints.
- Provide a closing that is comforting and positive.
- Always sign the letter.
- Include your name, title and contact phone number.
- Send the letter to the Director of Security, School Chief, and Chief of Communications for review and approval before sending.
- Translate into Spanish as appropriate.

Sample Letter: Weapon at School (to be printed on school letterhead)

Dear Families,

I am writing to let you know that one of your child's classmates brought a BB gun to school today. The student did not use it to threaten another child, but some of the students did see it.

No child was ever in danger; however, this may have been unsettling for some students.

Please use this opportunity to remind your children that only school-related items should be brought to school. Also, please reinforce with your child the message that they should always tell an adult at school if they see a student doing something that might hurt themselves or another student.

The safety of your children is our first concern. If you or your child has questions about today's events, please do not hesitate to call me at (insert phone).

Sincerely,
Signature
Name
Title

Considerations

- Always use your school or District letterhead.
- Briefly explain the emergency.
- Explain school's response to the emergency.
- Tell parents what they can do to help their children after the emergency and where to call for more information.
- Remember privacy laws and police investigation constraints.
- Provide a closing that is comforting and positive.
- Always sign the letter.
- Include your name, title and contact phone number.
- Send the letter to the Director of Security, School Chief, and Chief of Communications for review and approval before sending.
- Translate into Spanish as appropriate.

Sample Robocall: Lockout for Bomb Threat

This is Principal (insert name) with a message for families of students at (insert school name).

I am calling to let you know that earlier this afternoon, we were made aware of a potential threat to the campus. The District Safety and Security team immediately began working with the Rochester Police Department's canine units.

Students were immediately brought outside, and out of an abundance of caution, we are dismissing students early today while police complete their investigation. Families may pick up students who do not ride the bus at the (insert location) parking lot.

Any threats to our school community will always be taken seriously. Your cooperation and support will help improve the safety and security for our campus. If you see or hear anything that concerns you, say something – families can contact Principals directly, and students can always reach out to a trusted adult. Thank you for your patience and understanding.

Good evening (insert school name) faculty and staff. This is Principal (insert name).

Thank you for all the work you did today to keep our students safe and calm during the incident that occurred this afternoon. The Rochester Police Department and RCSD Safety and Security team conducted a thorough search of the building and the campus, and have given us the “all-clear” to re- enter the building. Please feel free to come in and retrieve your belongs.

I appreciate your cooperation, diligence, and swift action today. I am grateful that everyone is safe. Once again, thank you, and have a good evening.

Good evening (insert school name) families. This is Principal (insert name) calling with an update on the potential threat to our campus earlier today.

After receiving notification by the Rochester Police Department, we immediately evacuated the building and moved all students and staff to safety. A thorough search of our entire campus took place, and we have received clearance to re-enter the building. (Insert school name) will be open tomorrow as a regular school day for all students, faculty, and staff.

The safety of your children is our first concern. If you or your child has questions about today's events, please do not hesitate to call me at (insert phone). Thank you for your cooperation.

Sample Letter: Bus Incident (to be printed on school letterhead)

Dear Families,

I am writing to let you know that some of our children saw a disturbing scene on the way to school this morning. Some school buses drove passed the victim of a violent crime before police had secured the scene and buses were rerouted. It is important to know that your children were not in danger and arrived safely to school.

Our school social counselor, (insert name), visited classrooms today to speak with the students regarding this incident. The District's Student Support Services team was also available throughout the day for any children who needed special attention and support. Classes proceeded regularly, and students experienced a normal day of school.

All of us want to protect our children from any impact of violence. It is especially distressing when young children are exposed to these types of situations. If your child comes home worried about the incident, or if you feel they may benefit from additional assistance, please do not hesitate to call (insert School Counselor's name) at (insert phone).

If you have further questions, please contact me at (insert phone). Thank you.

Sincerely,
Signature
Name
Title

Considerations

- Always use your school or District letterhead.
- Briefly explain the emergency.
- Explain school's response to the emergency.
- Tell parents what they can do to help their children after the emergency and where to call for more information.
- Remember privacy laws and police investigation constraints.
- Provide a closing that is comforting and positive.
- Always sign the letter.
- Include your name, title and contact phone number.
- Send the letter to the Director of Security, School Chief, and Chief of Communications for review and approval before sending.
- Translate into Spanish as appropriate.

Sample Letter: Student Death (to be printed on school letterhead)

Dear Families,

I am writing to share upsetting news that has affected our school community. As you may or may not have heard, one of our fifth-grade students was the victim of gun violence this past weekend. We spoke to the students in his class today to make sure they know he is doing fine.

Students and staff react in different ways to these types of events. We should expect, try to understand, and accept a variety of emotions and behaviors. The most important thing we can do is to be supportive and encourage discussion about the event, the feelings it gives rise to, and ways of responding.

The District's Student Support Services team is working to support our students, families, and staff. They will be available to those who need special attention and support. We will try to maintain as normal a routine and structure as the situation allows and encourage you to do the same.

If your child comes home worried about the incident, or if you feel he or she may benefit from additional assistance, please do not hesitate to call our School Counselor, (insert name), at 585-235-7848.

I know that you will join us in our concern and support for those affected by this incident. Please do not hesitate to call me at (insert phone) with questions about your child or (insert school name).

Sincerely,
Signature
Name
Title

Considerations

- Always use your school or District letterhead.
- Briefly explain the emergency.
- Explain school's response to the emergency.
- Tell parents what they can do to help their children after the emergency and where to call for more information.
- Remember privacy laws and police investigation constraints.
- Provide a closing that is comforting and positive.
- Always sign the letter.
- Include your name, title and contact phone number.
- Send the letter to the Director of Security, School Chief, and Chief of Communications for review and approval before sending.
- Translate into Spanish as appropriate.

Sample Letter: Parent Confrontation (to be printed on school letterhead)

Dear Families,

I am writing to let you know about a disturbing incident that took place at arrival time this morning. A parent made inappropriate and profane remarks, which may have made children feel threatened.

Our school safety and security staff reacted quickly and directed the parent into an isolated location in the building. After speaking with the parent and assessing the situation, I called the authorities who responded promptly.

No child was ever in danger; however, this was an unsettling event for any students who may have witnessed it.

Please use this opportunity to remind your children that aggressive behavior, even when verbal, is never an acceptable way to resolve a conflict and will not be tolerated at school. If your child has questions about this morning's events, please do not hesitate to call me at (insert phone).

Sincerely,
Signature
Name
Title

Considerations

- Always use your school or District letterhead.
- Briefly explain the emergency.
- Explain school's response to the emergency.
- Tell parents what they can do to help their children after the emergency and where to call for more information.
- Remember privacy laws and police investigation constraints.
- Provide a closing that is comforting and positive.
- Always sign the letter.
- Include your name, title and contact phone number.
- Send the letter to the Director of Security, School Chief, and Chief of Communications for review and approval before sending.
- Translate into Spanish as appropriate.

Sample Letter: Social Media Use (to be printed on school letterhead)

Dear Families,

It is with concern for our students that we write today to seek your help.

Over the past few weeks, I have had to address many challenges as a result of social networking, especially by our xxx-graders on Facebook. The frequency of these issues is increasing. The faculty and I are concerned about educational distractions and the social and emotional well-being of our students.

Even though this activity may be initiated outside of school hours, your children are feeling the impact at school. Our school staff is spending a significant amount of time mediating, counseling, and investigating issues that involve social media activity, resulting in the loss of instructional time.

Our school community is committed to promoting the safe and responsible use of the Internet. While social media sites such as Facebook offer incredible communication capabilities and social connections, they are not intended for elementary school students. The permitted minimum age to use the site is 13, according to Facebook's terms and conditions.

Should you decide to allow your child to have a Facebook profile, I am asking you to obtain their login and password, and check their wall postings and friends list daily. The problem with social media is that a misunderstanding between two individuals often involves everyone in their social circle. Unfortunately, we are seeing this happen among too many children in our school community. For more tips, I encourage you to visit the Facebook Family Safety Center at <https://www.facebook.com/safety>.

The (insert school name) community is committed to providing an environment conducive to learning. Children are not able to concentrate and learn if they are socially stressed. If you have any questions about your child's education or concerns about the use of social media, please do not hesitate to call me at (insert phone).

Sincerely,
Signature
Name
Title

Considerations

- Always use your school or District letterhead.
- Briefly explain the emergency.
- Explain school's response to the emergency.
- Tell parents what they can do to help their children after the emergency and where to call for more information.

- Remember privacy laws and police investigation constraints.
- Provide a closing that is comforting and positive.
- Always sign the letter.
- Include your name, title and contact phone number.
- Send the letter to the Director of Security, School Chief, and Chief of Communications for review and approval before sending.
- Translate into Spanish as appropriate.

Sample Robocall: Special Situations

This is Principal (insert name) with a message for families of students at (insert school name).

This afternoon we learned that several of our students were exposed to, and some ingested, brownies at school today, that appeared to be laced with a controlled substance.

Two of the students became anxious and agitated after eating the brownies. Both of them have been sent to the hospital. As a further precaution, several other students were also taken to the hospital for examination.

The families of all students that we know consumed the brownies have been contacted, but I wanted all of our (insert school name) families to be aware. The Rochester Police Department is investigating this incident. If you have any information or concern that your child may have consumed the brownies, please see medical advice immediately.

The safety of your children is our first concern. If you or your child has questions about today's events, please do not hesitate to call me at (insert phone). Thank you.

This is Principal (insert name) with a message for families of students at (insert school name).

I am calling to let you know that we have increased security precautions at our school. The District is working with local law enforcement to investigate threats of violence between groups of students, some of whom attend (insert school name).

I want to reassure you that we had a normal day of school today with no safety issues on campus. We are taking precautionary measures to maintain a safe learning environment for the vast majority of students who behave properly. We will take appropriate disciplinary action against the few who engage in disruptive behavior.

I wanted you to know why you may be seeing an increased presence of Rochester police and school security staff, especially at arrival and dismissal time.

The safety of your children is our first concern. If you or your child has questions, please do not hesitate to call me at (insert phone). Thank you.

This is Principal (insert name) with a message for families of students at (insert school name).

This morning, we briefly evacuated the building because of some smoke that developed in the cafeteria kitchen during meal preparation. No students were in the cafeteria at the time, and are likely to believe that this was a routine fire drill.

The Rochester Fire Department responded quickly, and within xx minutes cleared the building for re-entry. All students are safe and back to their normal school schedule.

The safety of your children is our first concern. If you or your child has questions about today's events, please do not hesitate to call me at (insert phone). Thank you.

This is Principal (insert name) with a message for families of students at (insert school name).

All students are safe and classes are taking place normally today. However, during the demolition of two vacant houses across the street from our building, a gas line was struck.

The Rochester Fire Department and Rochester Gas and Electric responded quickly and turned off the gas at the source.

There was an aroma of gas in the lobby of our building, but the situation was resolved promptly, and students and faculty were never in danger.

The safety of your children is our first concern. If you or your child has questions about today's events, please do not hesitate to call me at (insert phone). Thank you.



Appendix B



Translation *Services*

Translation Services

Communications translators process Arabic, Nepali, Somali, and Spanish translation requests for the Superintendent, Central Office departments, and some non-curriculum school-based communications to families. Document translation requests can be submitted via Google. Interpretation services can be requested via www.RCSDK12.org/BEWL.

- The accepted formats for submissions are Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and Publisher. No PDFs or images of text will be accepted.
- Requests will be translated according to priority (see priority schedule) and the order in which they are received. Please be advised that other priority projects may delay the completion of translations.
- Documents must be submitted at least 3-5 working days in advance. Projects over 5000 words require a minimum of two weeks' notice.
- Completion times for translation depend on several factors: the amount of text to be translated, technical vocabulary, the complexity of highly formatted files, and the team's current workload.

Word Count	Regular Business Days
Less than 500	3 – 5 days
500 – 1,000 words	5 – 7 days
1,001 – 3,000 words	7 – 10 days
3,001 – 5,000 words	10 – 15 days
5,001 words and more	Require approval by the Chief of Communications

- If revisions are needed for a previously translated document, those must be clearly marked on the original document.
- Copyrighted materials should not be submitted for translation, unless accompanied by written permission from the publisher or author and cleared through the RCSD Legal Department.
- Draft documents will not be accepted.
- Same-day priority translations require approval by the Chief of Communications.
- Translations usually take more space on a page. It is a good idea to fit the communications in both languages on one page (front and back). Arabic translations may require a change in the format due to formatting.



Appendix C



Freedom of Information Law **Guidelines**

Freedom of Information

New York State's Freedom of Information Law (Public Officers Law §87 et. seq., Rochester City School District Board of Education Policy 1120) allows members of the public to access records of governmental agencies. FOIL provides a process for the review and copying of an agency's records. More information about the Freedom of Information Law can be found at <http://www.dos.ny.gov/about/foil2.html>.

Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) Requests

FOIL requests are managed by the Rochester City School District's Communications Department and may be submitted in one of three ways:

1. Online submission www.rcsdk12.org/foil
2. Via email: FOIL@rcsdk12.org
3. Via mail: RCSD Communications Department 131 West Broad Street, Rochester, NY 14614

To ensure efficient processing of your application, please provide the following information:

- Requester's name, address, telephone number, and email address.
- A reasonable description of the records sought, containing specific information, which will allow the District to identify and locate the records.
- The requester's preference to inspect/review records, copy records, or both.

The District's Records Access Officer can either:

Approve the request;

Deny the request, stipulating the legal reasons for denial;

Approve the request in part and deny the request in part (i.e., some of the requested materials are released and some are withheld, or certain information is deleted for privacy reasons or other legal reasons), specifying the legal reasons for the denied portions thereof;

Give notice of an extension of time needed to fulfill the request.

For a full subject matter list consisting of the categories of all records the District possesses, please consult the NYS Records Retention and Disposition Schedule.

Fee for Duplication of Records

The Rochester City School District charges the statutorily permitted fee of \$.25 per page for reproducing records requested under FOIL, or the actual cost of reproducing the records (Public Officers Law §87[1][b] and [c]). Payment must be made to the Rochester City School District by check or money order.

Appeal of a Denial

Any person denied access to a record may appeal within 30 days in writing to:

Superintendent of Schools
Rochester City School District
131 West Broad Street Rochester, NY 14614