Rochester City School District

Standard Operating Procedures for Communications Department

CLASS
OF
2019

Revised 2/9/2022

This document establishes uniform procedures for the most common services that the Communications Department provides.

MEDIA

Press Releases/Media Advisories

Communications creates and distributes press releases and media advisories to local news media to communicate District and school-level news and events.

- Content created by requester and sent to Communications via email.
- Content required at least one week in advance of the news item and/or event.
- Communications develops press release/media advisory.
- Media advisories are typically sent two days in advance of the event.

Media Inquiries

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

- Contact the Communications Department right away.
- Request will be approved or denied.
- Messaging will be developed as appropriate for interview.

Press Conferences

Communications organizes press conferences at the District and school level.

- If time allows, Communications notifies news media two days in advance of press conference.
- Communications works with building level Principal and/or custodial staff to select venue at 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, phone, website, and social media) in the event of a weather-related emergency.

- Communications executes robocalls and emails to families and staff.
- Communications posts on-screen alert and banner on website.

- Communications shares on social media (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram) and creates an automated response via Facebook messenger related to school closings.
- 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, email, phone, and/or text) both Districtwide and to specific groups (grade levels, schools, etc.).

- 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). Note: Additional time may be required to prepare a custom call group in tandem with the IT data team and for translations.
- Communications drafts scripts for emails, letters, and robo calls and submits them to requester for approval.
- Communications excutes robocalls and emails to family and staff.
- Robo calls 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 45 minutes to complete a robo call to all RCSD families and staff. In the event of an emergency, the team requires 60 minutes to execute a robo call in English and Spanish.
- Additional time is required for the translation of the call in multiple languages, based on availability of translators.

All Staff Communications

Communications prepares and distributes emails, letters, and robo calls 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, letters, and robo calls and submits them to requester for approval.
- Communications sends all staff emails and robo calls.
- Robo calls 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 announcement in Constant Contact.
- Communications schedules announcement to go out on designated date and posts on social media.

Spanish Translations

Communications translator processes Spanish translation requests for the Superintendent, Central Office departments, and individual schools.

- For documents with less than 1,000 words, please allow two to four business days; for 1,001 – 5,000 words allow four to eight business days. Projects over 10 pages require a minimum of two weeks' notice.

Please refer to Translation Guidelines (Procedures), Appendix B.

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Branding

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

- Request for a branding change is sent to Communications via email.
- Communications meets with requester to discuss needed items.
- Communications creates items and provides back to requester for approval.

Please also see website development and social media for more details.

Logos

Communications creates all logos for schools, programs, and departments.

- Request for a new or updated logo is sent to Communications via email.
- A meeting is scheduled to discuss the creative.
- Communications creates several ideas and sends back to requester for review.
- Revisions are made and a final logo is supplied back to the requester.

Flyers

Communications prepares design and layout suitable for printing and online posting; copy must be provided by the department requesting the flyer.

- Content, including full text for the flyer, is required at least two weeks in advance of the due date, ideally four weeks before the event, and should be sent via email to Communications. Please note: Due date is not the date of the event. Two weeks is required at minimum to advertise an event. Requests must come with all information via email, not by phone call or text.
- Communications creates the flyer with design and content and sends to requester within two to four days for approval. Timeline is based upon other work obligations and/or requests.
- Requester reviews the flyer and approves or requests revisions.
- Upon approval, final flyer is distributed to families and staff.

Brochures/Booklets/Trifolds

Communications writes copy and prepares design and layout suitable for printing and online posting. Basic content should be provided by the department if applicable.

- Content provided at least four weeks in advance of the due date, depending on size, content, request for custom graphics, review time, and print time. Requests must come with all information via email, not by phone call or text.
- Communications will organize information for design.
- Communications will send piece to requester for review.
- Once final and approved, piece can be sent for printing/emailing/posting.

WEBSITE

Website Development

Communications creates new websites/sub-sites as requested for specific needs and/or openings of new schools and programs. Website build, initial content upload, and layout is done by Communications. Timeline varies due to the scope of work.

- Communications meets with department/team requesting full-site build to discuss look, feel, and organization.
- Requester provides content to Communications to build original site.
- Site is reviewed with requester to finalize content.
- Staff training is scheduled for the school/program/department to manage all information and updates.
- Website modifications: request and content is emailed to Communications; most changes can be made within one to two business days.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social Media

Communications manages and posts content for District's Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram pages.

- Content can be submitted to Communications. Content, including full text and/or image for the post, needs to be provided at least one day in advance of the posting date.
- Communications will determine if content should be posted on District's main pages and/or posted from the school/program/department and shared by the District.

Social Media for Schools/Departments/Programs

Communications manages 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.

Social Media Event Creation

Communications creates Facebook events on the RCSD account; content must be provided by the department requesting the event.

- Departments/schools/programs initiate a meeting with Communications, where the request is made. Event information is required upon event request. Events should be created two to four weeks prior to the event date. Please note: two weeks is needed at minimum to advertise an event. Requests must come with complete information via email, not by phone call or text.
- Once the request is approved, the event will be created on the District's main Facebook page. Co-hosts will be added as necessary.

TECHNICAL SUPPORT

Informational Videos

Communications works with schools and departments to help prepare scripting, provide guidance on imagery, and edit informational videos that meet certain criteria.

- Full process may require one to four weeks, depending on length of video and scope of filming/editing necessary.
- Departments/schools/programs initiate a meeting with Communications when the request is made and a timeline and due date will be established.
- Meetings are scheduled to capture video footage needed for video.
- Video is edited and provided to requester for approval.
- If the schedule does not allow for direct support, best efforts will be made to ensure the asking department/school is provided with the resources.

Districtwide In-Person and Virtual Events

Communications schedules, sets up, hosts, and streams in-person, hybrid, and virtual events to YouTube and Facebook. Meetings can be hosted on Zoom or Microsoft Live meetings.

- Initial meetings should occur at least one month prior to the event to establish technical support, participants, presentation, supporting media, and robo call/email/social media/website promotion.
- If the schedule does not allow for direct support of a live event, best efforts will be made to ensure the asking department/school is provided with the resources to host the event.

School-Based In-Person and Virtual Events

Communications assists with assessing what audio-visual equipment is needed for the event and supplement, if available. Communications also assists with scheduling, set up, hosting, recording, and streaming to the school's YouTube and Facebook. The meeting can be hosted with in-person live camera recording in tandem with online hosting and recording (Zoom, Live event).

- Initial meetings should occur at least one month prior to the event to establish technical support, assess equipment needs, participants, presentation, supporting media, and robo call/email/social media/website promotion. Equipment drop-off, set up, and takedown times are established.
- Support from school personnel may also be required depending on scope of event.
- If the schedule does not allow for direct support of a live event, best efforts will be made to ensure the asking department/school is provided with the resources to host the event.

Photography Requests: Events

Communications takes photographs at school/department events by request.

- Request for photographs at an event must be made at least two weeks prior to event, based upon availability of Communications team.
- Communications provides photographs within one to two business days, usually by google drive sharing.

Photography Requests: Headshots

Communications takes headshots of new and existing employees.

- Requests for photographs are based upon availability of staff person and Communications team. If the headshot is needed for staffing announcement, employee must come in before announcement to have photo taken.
- Communications works with Human Capital to coordinate the date and time for the headshot of new employees.
- Headshots are taken and approved by the staff person on site.
- Photo is edited and supplied within one to two business days for announcement and kept on file for future use.

TECHNICAL TRAININGS

Robo Call Training

Communications administers school-based training on the process to prepare, record, and send 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 booked for approximately one hour to provide the basic rundown and identify potential areas of need.
- Each department and school should 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 proper use of social media, which includes account set up, 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, but Communications must have access to them.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION LAW (FOIL) REQUESTS

The Chief of Communications is the Access Officer for the District. Communications receives and logs FOIL requests and determines which department/party is responsible to provide the response data.

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

Please refer to FOIL Guidelines, Appendix C.

APPENDIX A

Rochester City School District

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.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Checklist for School Emergency Communications ……………………………………………. page 3

Communicating with the Media ………………………………………………………………….. page 4

Sample Communications …………………………………………………………………………... pages 5 - 16

CHECKLIST FOR SCHOOL EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS

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 robo call, on the District website, and 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 robo call and/or email.
- Communicate with Families. Send a robo call 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 robo call. Mail or backpack a parent letter home the same day if appropriate and possible. Communications may help to write robo calls and letters, or you may write these using the samples provided by Communications. Robo calls 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.

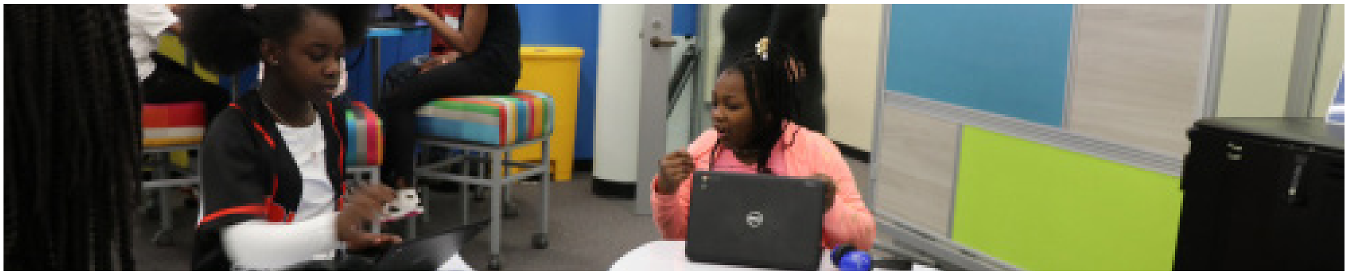
COMMUNICATING WITH THE MEDIA

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 lockout, 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 lockout.

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

SAMPLE

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 Robo Call: 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 Robo Call: 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 Robo Call: 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 Robo Call: 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 Robo Call: 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

SAMPLE

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 Robo Call: 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

SAMPLE

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

SAMPLE

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

SAMPLE

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 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

SAMPLE

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 Robo Call: 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

Rochester City School District

Procedural Guidelines for Translation Services

Procedural Guidelines for Translation Services

Purpose: These guidelines outline key procedures to follow related to translation of documents generated by the RCSD in accordance with its commitment to provide quality language services in order to ensure effectiveness.

Scope: This applies to faculty, staff and relevant RCSD personnel who may be responsible for implementing these procedures.

Procedures:

- Document translation requests can be submitted by:
    - Filling out a google form, which is under "Request Translation Services" https://www.rcsdk12.org/dome.
    - Writing an email to: spanishtranslations@rcsdk12.org
      arabictranslations@rcsdk12.org
      nepalitranslations@rcsdk12.org
      somalitranslations@rcsdk12.org

- When submitting a request for translation, it should include the following:
    - Name of Department/School
    - Date (when request is submitted)
    - Department head/Principal approval (by way of c.c. in the email)
    - Name of Person submitting request
    - Telephone
    - Title/Description of document
    - Date needed
    - Number of pages/words
    - Special instructions

- The ideal format for request submissions is Microsoft Word. However, documents in Excel, PowerPoint, or Publisher are also accepted.
- Requests will be translated according to priority (see priority schedule) and the order in which they are received.
- Service requests: Documents need to be submitted at least 3-5 working days in advance. Projects over 10 pages require a minimum of two weeks' notice.
- Delivery timeline: Turnaround times for translation will depend on several factors: the amount of text to be translated, technical vocabulary, the complexity of highly formatted files, and current workload.

Word Count	Regular Business Days
If less than 1,000 words	2-4 days
1,001 – 5,000 words	4-8 days

Note: Projects over 5,000 words will require a meeting with the supervisor to discuss the details.

- Requesting a Priority Project (Urgent notice, same-day request) Please remember that examples of "same-day" urgent communications to be processed include letters to parents after a school emergency, or a high-priority, time-sensitive communication. Keep in mind that same-day projects require a minimum of four (4) hours for translation.
- Revisions: If a previously translated document is updated and there is a need to request a revised

translation, the requester should clearly mark exactly what changes have been made to the English version. This will allow for a more effective use of resources and a faster turnaround time.

- Requests must be submitted only by RCSD personnel and the material must be RCSD related.
- Be sure the English document submitted is the final and approved text to be translated.
- When submitting several files, it is recommended compressing them into one zipped file.
- 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.For any translated document(s) or material to be sent to the print shop, it is HIGHLY recommended that it be proofread one final time prior to printing.

Priority Schedule:

Level	Description
I	• Emergency notices to parents about safety, health hazards, or cancelations • Priorities set by the Communications Department
II	• District-wide communications from the office of the Superintendent and Executive Cabinet • Items from the Board of Education • Communications in general, documents/materials to be posted on the District website
III	• District Departments (e.g. Math, Arts, PreK, etc.): • Notices, announcements, brochures, flyers, assessments, newsletters, etc. • School-based: • Principals' communications with parents, student handbooks, newsletters, announcements, events, etc.
IV	• Individual Students: • Schools with high ELL & Bilingual enrollment • School procedural manuals (families, community) • Invitations to school events • Generic repeated communications • Report card comments • Disciplinary notices

General information regarding translations:

- Translations usually take more space on a page. It is a good idea to fit the communications in both languages on one page (back-to-back), as it saves on paper and makes distribution more efficient.
- If there is no electronic copy of the original document, you may send a hard copy via courier or a scanned copy. However, please keep in mind the turnaround time may be longer than expected.
- Submission of scanned copies of originals and PDFs is not recommended because they are not editable, can become distorted when converted to another format, and may take twice as long to deliver, being a less efficient use of resources.
- If possible, please **do not send images of text**. They are very difficult to match with the original document.
- Please be aware that our translations are intended only for non-English speaking students, families,

and members of the community. However, you may use our services to assist bilingual professionals in the generation of communications, review, and feedback of materials, etc.

Key Definitions:

Translation: Converting written translation of a document from English to the target language. All information is available in original text format and no changes or additions are made to the document.

Sight Translation: On-the-spot oral interpretation of a document written in English.

Interpretation: The oral translation of speech as it occurs in conversation. There are two forms of interpretation:

Consecutive: Done while listening to speech, interpretation is provided during pauses; or
Simultaneous: Done throughout the conversation; usually done through headphones and a microphone.

Emergency: Translation or interpretation provided immediately. Situations may include health emergencies, impending school closures or safety information, or major district events.

High Priority: Situations involving district or school-wide timely information dissemination, or information needed within a limited time frame as determined by district or school leadership.

Responsibility: The Office of Communications has someone providing ongoing translation support for documents in general not related to Special Education. The Special Education Department has dedicated translators who support their specific requests.

Accountability: The Foreign Language Translator (Spanish) reports directly to, and works under the general supervision of the Chief Communications Officer.

Marisol Ramos-Lopez
Chief Communications Officer
Phone: (585) 262-8162
Email: Marisol.Lopez@rcsdk12.org

APPENDIX C

Rochester City School District

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