Best Practices for Family Messaging

# Consider…

## Jump to Useful Language

* What was seen and what needs to be explained.
  + This morning before school some of our students saw .

# Tone and Format

* State what happened in a matter-of-fact manner.
* State what the school did in response. (“Police and school district security responded.”)
* Attempt to address parents’ concerns about whether students were in danger. (“No students were in the area where the BB gun was discharged.”)
* Reiterate school policy, when appropriate. (“Look-alike toy weapons are taken very seriously.”)
* Give parents ideas on how to protect their children, when appropriate. (“Please discuss with your child the importance of telling an adult if they hear a student making a threat against another person.”)
* Do not name the students involved but tell what actions are being taken.
* Emphasize the safety of students and staff is a top priority.
* Give your phone number and invite parents to call you if they have questions or concerns.

# Timing

* Do not assume students are gone after school. Send a notification to all schools in the affected area. (Example: 5-24-17 After School Lockdown at Chinook and Tyee)

# Wording

Do not alarm (especially in the subject line). Words to use instead…

* (in Subject Line) Lockdown > Safety Notification at [School]

# Loop in the school FIRST

Always send an email to the school principal and office manager with a copy of the message anytime we run a communication through our office to a specific school, even during the summer months.

# General Notifications

Outside Events

* If promoting an event organized by an outside organization, make clear in the message. The mobile app includes the school name and logo at the top of the message. This makes it clear that the message is coming from the school. Adding a line that says “BLANK wants to invite you” lets families know that the school is not organizing the event.

# Useful Language

Dear Families,

* Estimadas familias de

Sincerely, XXXX Principal

* Sinceramente, XXXX Director (or Directora for female)

## Safety

* The safety of our students and staff is always our first priority and therefore we take immediate action on any report of a threat. We encourage students to report any safety concern they may have.
  + La seguridad de nuestros estudiantes y del personal es siempre nuestra primordial prioridad y por lo tanto, tomamos las medidas inmediatas en cualquier informe de una amenaza. Animamos a los estudiantes a reportar cualquier preocupación de seguridad que puedan tener.
* We took immediate appropriate action, according to district policy.
  + De acuerdo con la política del distrito, tomamos medidas disciplinarias inmediatas.
* We recognize this incident may be upsetting for students. If you have concerns or your child needs support, please get in touch. You may call me at 206.361.XXXX or email me at [XXXXX@highlineschools.org](mailto:XXXXX@highlineschools.org).
  + Reconocemos que este incidente puede ser molesto para los estudiantes. Si tiene alguna inquietud o si su hijo necesita ayuda, por favor contácteme al 206.361.XXXX o envíeme un correo electrónico a [xxxx@highlineschools.org.](mailto:xxxx@highlineschools.org)

## Weapons:

* [For Elementary Schools] - Please remind your children of the seriousness of bringing *any* weapon to school, even toy “look alike” weapons, which are treated the same as real weapons. This precaution is for everyone’s safety. // Please take the time to discuss with your child the importance of immediately telling an adult any time they see a weapon or something that looks like a weapon at school. Assure your child that reporting a weapon is the right thing to do and protects him/her and others at school from harm.
  + Se toma muy seriamente la posesión de cualquier arma en la escuela. Por favor recuérdele a su niño de la seriedad de traer *cualquie*r arma o juguete “que parezca ser” arma a la escuela. Esta precaución es para la seguridad de todos.
  + Por favor tome el tiempo para hablar con su hijo sobre la importancia de notificar inmediatamente a un adulto al momento que vean un arma o algo que se parezca a un arma en la escuela. Asegúrele a su hijo que reportar un arma es lo correcto y protege a todos en la escuela de un posible daño.

## Lockdowns

* This morning at about XXXX, we were advised to go into a full lockdown due to reports of police activity in the area.
  + Esta mañana alrededor de las XXXX se nos aconsejó que tuviéramos un cierre completo debido a un reporte de actividades policíacas en el área.
* For the safety of both students and parents, we do not alert parents while a lockdown is in progress or allow students to contact their parents by cell phone. This is an emergency management best practice. Police do not want parents to come to school to retrieve their children, because that could put the parent in danger and/or could compromise the law enforcement response.
  + Por la seguridad tanto de los estudiantes como de los padres, nosotros no avisamos a las familias cuando el cierre está en efecto. Esto es una práctica de las condiciones de emergencia. La policía no quiere que los padres vengan a la escuela a recoger a sus hijos, porque esto podría poner a los padres en peligro y/o comprometer la respuesta de las autoridades policiales.
* Please know that your child’s safety is the central purpose of all our emergency procedures.
  + Por favor sepa que la seguridad de su hijo es nuestra primordial prioridad en todos nuestros procedimientos de emergencia.

## Modified Lockdowns

Tip: don’t use “modified lockdown,” instead use something more descriptive.

* During the lockdown, students were allowed to move about inside the school, but access to the school is limited.
* For the safety of both students and parents, we do not alert parents while a lockdown is in progress or allow students to contact their parents by cell phone. This is an emergency management best practice. Police do not want parents to come to school to retrieve their children, because that could put the parent in danger and/or could compromise the police response.
* Police ask us to go into lockdowns as a precaution when they are operating in the neighborhood. The safety of our students and staff is always our first priority. If you ever have any questions or concerns, I encourage you to contact me at .

## Luring

We learned of an incident that happened this morning near school, and we want you to be aware of it so you can talk with your children about safe walking practices.

* Nos hemos enterado de un incidente que sucedió esta mañana cerca de la escuela. Queremos que estén conscientes de ello para que puedan hablar con sus niños acerca de las prácticas de seguridad al caminar.

This is an opportunity to have a discussion with your children reminding them of these precautions when walking to and from school.

* Be aware of your surroundings.
* Walk with a friend whenever possible.
* If anyone approaches you or you feel threatened, report it immediately to a trusted adult. Ésta es una oportunidad para tener una discusión con sus niños recordándoles las precauciones que deben tomar cuando caminan a la escuela y de la escuela.
* Estar pendiente de su alrededor.
* Caminar con un amigo siempre que sea posible.
* Si alguien se le acerca o se sientes amenazado, correr y reportarlo inmediatamente con un adulto con el cual tenga confianza.

Talk with your children about the route they should take and who they should walk with. It is also helpful to role play some words a stranger might say. If your child should be approached by a stranger, please report it to police and to the school immediately.

* Hable con sus hijos sobre la ruta que deberían tomar y con quién deberían caminar. También es útil practicar con ellos algunas palabras que un extraño podría decir. Si un extraño se le acerca a su hijo, repórtelo a la policía y a la escuela inmediatamente.