Annex C. Communications Plan

Timely and accurate communications to the following audiences is critical: school faculty, staff and students; parents of students and families of staff; fire, law enforcement and other local emergency services; the superintendent’s office; parent and teacher organizations and advisory councils; and other partners within the community.

**Internal Communications** (fill in your procedures using below as an example)

Communication with school district officials, and school staff, faculty, and students.

***School Emergency Response Team (SERT)***

1. Upon receiving a report of an emergency, the principal or designee will make a decision to activate all or part of the SERT.

2. The principal or designee will activate SERT members by notifying them via the following communication options: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

3. The SERT will oversee all internal communications regarding the facts relating to the emergency and the School’s response.

***Faculty, Staff and Students***

* Reports of Emergencies: All faculty, staff and students are expected to report all emergencies to the school office. A decision will be made at that time whether to activate all or part of the SERT.
* Emergency General Assembly: In the event crucial information must be shared immediately, the SERT will assemble all students and staff (location) and provide them with essential information.
* Senior Staff Meeting. If a separate meeting with senior staff is needed, the Incident Commander (IC) will call them to the conference room prior to or during the general assembly. The IC will re-emphasize that only one spokesperson has been authorized to speak to the media.

***In the event that an emergency assembly is impractical or unsafe, one or more of the following means of communication will be used:*** (fill in your own, using below as an example)

1. Intercom system:

2. Telephone:

3. Email:

***In the event that hard-wired electronic devices are not operational, such as the intercom and telephone systems, the following alternatives will be used:***

1 .Messengers; 2-way radios; and megaphones:

2. Faculty Meeting. The principal or Incident Commander reserves the option to hold a faculty meeting as soon as possible to provide accurate and updated information about the emergency, to review emergency procedures and to plan for the upcoming period of time. This will facilitate the response and reduce misinformation and rumors.

***Transportation Staff***

Bus drivers that are traveling in their buses enroute to or from school, with or without students, will notify the transportation coordinator as soon as possible of any incident that interrupts their expected arrival times, or they will attempt to seek help from those who can communicate that message. Self-transporting staff will do the same.

**Central Office Notification**

The Director of Schools or designee will be notified of any incident occurring at school site. At his/her discretion, the School Board President will be informed of the emergency.

**Severe Weather Reports** (Use if applicable)

A Weather Alert Radio is located in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and will be used to receive alerts for a variety of hazardous conditions. Information from alerts will generate appropriate leadership announcements and actions. *Note: For more information about Weather Alert Radios see:* [*http://www.nws.noaa.gov/nwr/*](http://www.nws.noaa.gov/nwr/)

**External Communications** (fill in your procedures using below as an example)

The School Emergency Response Team (SERT) will oversee all external communications with parents, responders, and the media.

***Parents***

A modified version of this plan will be provided to each parent in a backpack package provided by their student and during the School’s open house at the start of the school year.

Parents or guardians of all students directly involved in or affected by an emergency will be contacted by the principal or designated SERT member as soon as possible. The SERT member will inform parents fully of the circumstances and the School’s response. The IC will consider guidance provided by the district’s medical, counseling, legal or other advisors in addressing the situation.

In the event that the parents of a large number of students must be notified of an emergency affecting their children, the SERT will produce a script to be used for contacting parents.

**Backpack Letters**

When a critical incident has occurred at school or has involved one or more students or staff members in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_school, letters can be an effective way of relaying important and helpful information. The decision to send a backpack letter home is made on a case-by-case basis by the IC in consultation with the SERT.

Backpack letters will include these components, at a minimum:

* 1st paragraph: outlines the situation accurately.
* 2nd paragraph: steps the school has taken to ensure the safety of students and staff members.
* 3rd paragraph: lists ways that families can help and how families can get more information.

Letters should not:

* Promise a police or public health investigation.
* Violate the privacy of individuals involved in the situation.
* Create unwarranted anxiety.
* Speculate.

Letter Preparation:

A draft letter is prepared by the Information and Media Representative and reviewed by the IC. A review by the Superintendent and local Public Information Officer should occur under certain circumstances and always when local emergency responders are involved. A technical review by public health, School Nurse, School Counselor, or other sources is advised when technical information emanating from those sources is included. Every effort should be made to allow as much time as possible for the review process before school dismissal time.

***Call Team***

The Call Team is activated by the Incident Commander and used to place or receive large volumes of calls to or from parents, community leaders, etc. about selected incidents such as the death of a student, or when the automatic dialing system is not operational or needs to be augmented. The Call Team includes a member of the IT Department who operates a computer to: update the school website with information about the incident and what parents can do to help; send broadcast messages via the parent and community email network when school office staff are tending to other issues; and produce information sheets or scripts for the Call Team or SERT’s use, the content of which is provided by the SERT. The Team occupies (location) where multiple phone jacks, extra phones, and a LAN connection is located for this purpose.

Members:

* 1 Library staff
* 1 School Counselor
* 1 IT Department staff (minimum)
* Other staff as assigned

Responsibilities:

* Provide up-to-date information to parents when parents call a pre-designated cell/land line phone number(s).
* When directed, initiate calls to parents to inform them of an emergency and the status of their students.
* Assist the **Communication and Recorder** in her role to establish and sustain internal communications.

**School Website**

Updates for parents, parent organizations, community leaders, etc. will be posted on the School’s website (insert website) using the same information that is provided to the Call Team. Recovery activities such as counseling sessions, memorials, post event question & answer meetings and post-recovery open houses for parents, etc. will also be posted. Messages will be approved by the SERT and provided to the Webmaster (IT Staff) for posting. The webmaster will co-locate with the Call Team to enhance continuity of information.

**General Media Policies and Guidelines**

All faculty, staff, students and visitors will direct news media calls and questions to the principal, Incident Commander, Information and Media Representative, or local Public Information Officer who will in turn address the media and remain available, as needed, for continued media updates.

* The Information and Media representative serves as a liaison to the media, if needed.
* The principal or Incident Commander will decide whether to allow the media on the school grounds. The media is not allowed inside the school unless specifically authorized by the principal.
* Primary media assembly area: (insert location).
* Alternate site: (insert location).
* All requests for faculty, staff, or student interviews by the media must be submitted to the principal or Incident Commander for his/her approval in advance of the interview. No unauthorized information should be provided to the media.
* All questions and inquiries from local officials/responders will be directed to the Incident Commander. Inquiries from State/Federal officials and school board members will be referred to the Superintendent’s office.
* Requests for resources needed in response to the emergency are submitted through the Incident Commander to the local Emergency Management Agency.