

Crisis Communication Plan

Westside School

Westside School Crisis Communications Plan Alena Feeney Spring 2015



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Introduction

Purpose:

The purpose of this crisis communication plan is for the identification, preparation, implementation, and evaluation of school policies and processes related to internal and external emergencies.

Background:

Westside School located in Seattle, Washington is an independent K-8th grade program. The curriculum focuses on conceptual thinking, communication, and cooperation between students, parents, and faculty. Students are provided a safe, community driven learning environment.

The school is located in West Seattle, ten miles west of Seattle at 7740 34th Ave. SW. There are 330 students and 62 staff/faculty members at school daily- averaging close to 400 individuals that need to be informed and mobilized in case of emergency.

Crisis Action Team:

Head of School Assistant Head of School Chairmen of Board of Trustees School Counselor (on-call)

Crisis Communication Team:

Head of School
Director of Communications & Development -Spokesperson for school
Communications Coordinator

Stakeholders:

Parents, Students, Board of Trustees, Staff, Faculty Local neighborhood community, Police and Fire department



Mission, Vision & Identity

Westside Mission:

As an accredited NWAIS Independent School, Westside School prepares students for the world by challenging them to achieve academic success and by connecting their human spirit and imagination to learning.

Vision:

Westside School is recognized as West Seattle's premier, accredited Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 8 independent school program. We help students develop essential skills for the 21st century, including conceptual thinking, communication, and cooperation. Our students thrive in the safe, caring, inclusive community environment Westside provides.

Organizational Culture & Identity:

The Organizational culture/identity of Westside School is creative, inclusive, diverse and collaborative. Students are encouraged to apply logic to problem solving and to treat each other equally. Students call teachers and staff by first names and work within multi grade level groups. Higher-grade level students mentor the younger students through a buddy system that fosters cooperation and confidence. The staff and teachers work closely with parents and teachers to provide student feedback and academic development. The school also encourages parents to participate in the classroom directly, co-lead field trips, help raise funds for capitol campaigns and direct future of school development. The culture is one of inclusiveness and partnership between all stakeholders. Further, we are conservation-minded and utilize these principles inside and outside of the school. Through recycling and composting efforts on campus to local area beach cleanup projects, everyone is encourage to volunteer and represent Westside School through engaged community outreach.



Values & Structure:

Joyful Learning

We believe children experience the excitement of learning through academic achievement, creative expression, and cooperation with others.

High Academic Standards

We believe that the cultivation of problem-solving, innovative analytical thinking, and complex communication skills provides a strong foundation for lifelong success.

Confident Learners

We believe that children gain confidence through positive support and clear behavioral guidelines within a safe learning environment.

Faculty & Staff

Westside School employs 31 (classroom and specialty) teachers, 15 instructional assistants, and 12 staff. Most teaching staff hold advanced degrees.

Class Size

Our student/teacher ratio is approximately 9:1 for Lower School, and is slightly higher for Middle School

Pre-kindergarten – third grade, each class is staffed with a teacher and an instructional assistant. Pre-kindergarten class size is 15 students; Lower School ranges from 16 – 20, Middle School averages 14 – 15 per class.

Curriculum

Westside School offers an integrated, project based curriculum

Westside School offers rich specialty classes, including world languages (Mandarin & Spanish,) physical education, art and music

Every class participates in field trips and outdoor education to enhance the learning experience. Overnight experiences begin in first grade.



School Emergency: Contact List:

All contact regarding school threats, information and press requests must be routed to the **Head of School first**. He/she then determines when to galvanize the Action Team and/or Communication Teams.

School Directors:

Head of School (Will contact leadership team directly/call meeting)

Kate Mulligan: 206.932.2511

Email: katem@westsideschool.org

Assistant Head/ First Responder: Don Cunningham: 425.365.4275

Division Leaders:

Arionda Wynne (Pre K- 4th grade): 360.685.3936

Marc Saks (5-8th grade): 206.525.6389

Director of Communication & Development: Sarah Billings: 425.734.8974

Chairmen of Board: Robert Hadley: 206.961.7532

Parents are contacted directly through automated service called Bright Arrow-crisis messaging is sent by text and email. (Within first 60 minutes of threat)



Crisis Response Plan

(Internal policies- Action Plan)

Purpose:

Preparation and planning are keys to responding to an emergency before it becomes a crisis. This plan is designed to provide general guidance to the Westside School faculty and staff to help them respond quickly and responsibly to an emergency or crisis situation. By their very nature, not all emergencies can be planned for but this plan attempts to address actions that need to be taken during emergency or crisis situations.

Defining a Crisis:

A crisis is characterized as any threat or incident that creates chaos or trauma. If left unmanaged, an emergency can quickly develop into a crisis, and a crisis can quickly evolve from an isolated event to a full-blown uncontrollable situation with possibly tragic consequences.

Release of Westside Students after a Crisis: Parents of Westside students who arrive to pick up their students after a crisis will check in with the office manager, or her designee, and sign out the student. Students will be released ONLY to parents or others as indicated on their emergency forms. If a faculty or staff member is asked by a parent to release a student to them, they are to be directed to the office manager or the officially designated "Sign Out" person.

Communication: It is imperative that emergency signals be passed to our students and our faculty, who might be outside or off campus.

Potential Crises:

- Building Fire- evacuation and notification
- Campus Lockdown- Intruder comes into school
- Modified Lockdown (Outside)- If there is potential danger outside of school
- Modified Lockdown (Inside)- If there is potential danger inside of school (student/staff related)
- Earthquake- Building integrity/ Faculty responsibilities
- Missing or Death of a Child- procedures, community notification
- Evacuation (chemical/biological)- parent notification, staff & faculty responsibilities
- Medical Emergency- procedures for Anaphylaxis shock, school pandemic
- Bomb Threat
- Transportation/Field Trip Accident

Threats and Procedures for the students and staff:

Evacuation of the School

Signal: fire alarm or the verbal command, "please leave the building"

<u>Process:</u> Once the alarm is sounded, all individuals should leave the building following the posted evacuation routes in each classroom. Teachers should shut windows and doors and accompany their students to a pre-arranged assembly area. Exit from the building should be quiet and orderly. Roll should be taken immediately and reported to the CAT leader. Stay with your class and leave no student unattended.

Window Evacuation

If exit by the classroom door is not possible, use a designated window-breaking item to break a window (removing all of the glass) and help or lift children out and then exit yourself. Accompany children to designated meeting area and take roll.

Evacuation of the School Buildings & Grounds

Signal: Fire alarm and the verbal command "Evacuation GO"

<u>Process</u>: Once the signal is sounded, all individuals should leave the buildings following the posted evacuation routes in each classroom. Once outside, individuals should continue down the right hand side of 28th Ave. to Shorewood Christian School. They should cross the street at the crosswalk and assemble in the Shorewood Christian parking lot. Teachers should take roll, keep students as calm as possible and await further instructions.

Lock Down

In an emergency, evacuation should proceed as rapidly and safely as possible. There are two scenarios of Lock Down procedures;

- A. In-place Lock Down: Keeping students and staff in individual secure classrooms
- B. Central-location Lock Down: movement of students and staff out of the classrooms and securing the entire community in one designated location. (the gym)
- A. In-Place Lock Down

<u>Signal:</u> Verbal command "Lock Down", staff member will notify students and teachers outside of the building.

<u>Process:</u> Teacher should be sure the classroom door is shut and locked, lights are off and, if possible, shades are closed. Remain with the students in the classroom and keep them away from windows. Take attendance and inform the office by phone if a student is unaccounted for. Stay down and remain in the room until the "all clear" is announced. Leave no student unattended at any time. <u>If you are outside the building, please enter by the nearest door and return to your classroom.</u>

Emergency Signal Cards

Each room is equipped with four emergency cards: two green cards and two red cards. If possible one of these cards should be placed in the window, and the other card visible from the hallway, either under the door or taped to a glass frame. Red cards mean that emergency help is required immediately. Green cards signify that the class is safe and the responders can pass that

room until the critical incident is controlled. If no card is displayed, the responders will assume that help is needed.

Administrative Procedures

- Make certain that all students and staff are accounted for and safe.
- Meet the critical incident response team, and immediately inform them if anyone is missing and advise them of their likely location if thought to be in the building.
- School administrators and maintenance are to meet the arriving firefighters and provide them with a copy of the building floor plan, keys to the building, and indicated the location of the incident. The Crisis Action Team is then in charge of the critical incident response.

B. On-site Central Lock Down

Signal: "Gym-Lock Down: GO"

<u>Process</u>: In the event of an On-site Central Location evacuation, teachers should assemble their students and proceed quietly and quickly to the gym. Bring your emergency supply boxes with you, if possible. The door will be closed and locked. In the event of a chemical or biological agent, seal gaps under doorways and windows with duct tape, seal gaps around window and air conditioning units, bathroom and kitchen exhaust fans and stove vents with duct tape and plastic sheeting, wax paper or aluminum foil. Close off non-essential rooms. Turn off ventilation and air conditioning systems.

Earthquake

A. When students are inside the building

<u>Signal</u>: Verbal command "Earthquake" or feeling the ground move or objects fall <u>Process</u>: Get all children under their tables, having them hold onto the legs of the table. Keep the children away from the windows and as quiet and calm as possible. Following the initial movement be cautious of other falling debris. The teacher will determine when it is safe for his/her classroom to evacuate to designated area.

B. When students are outside of the building

If outside of the building, get as far away as possible from buildings and elevated objects that might scatter debris. Do not enter the building until given an all-clear signal. Immediately following an earthquake, children should remain where they are until given further instructions.

Emergency Supplies

Emergency water and food supplies (located in each room) should be used as needed. Stuffed animals for comfort are in the ECEC. Garbage bags can be used as rain gear for protection against water or rain.

Death of a child at school

In case of accidental or intentional death of students or staff members on campus, proceed as follows:

- a. Call 911
- b. Immediately contact the Head of School
- c. The Head of School will contact parents/guardians or next of kin.
- d. Each classroom teacher will receive notification, in person, by an administrator. Children will not be told of the death until factual details become available. Teachers should remain with their students in their classrooms.
- f. The Head of School will immediately convene with the CAT members to coordinate information dissemination and follow up strategies for students, staff and the community at large.

Bomb Threat

Signal: "Evacuation: GO"

<u>Process:</u> In the event of a bomb threat, the school and its grounds will be immediately evacuated as described above under item 2, Evacuation of Building and Grounds. (Unidentified or suspicious objects should be reported to the Head of School and to 911. Unidentified or suspicious objects should <u>NEVER</u> be touched or moved).

1. Utility and Maintenance Emergency

Phone Numbers:

Power Failure: 206-706-0051 Loss of Water: 206-244-2202

Plumbing Failure:

Telephone Failure: 1-800-954-1211

2. Civil Unrest, Local or National Emergency

Terrorism

Terrorists look for visible targets where they can avoid detection before and after an attack. To be prepared to deal with a terrorist incident, adapt many of the same techniques used to deal with other crises, but the most important is to be alert and aware of the surrounding area. The very nature of terrorism suggests there may be little or no warning. Terrorist acts make take the form of an explosion, a release of a hazardous material either chemical or biological.

In the event of an immediate terrorism threat, the school and its grounds will be immediately evacuated as described above under item 2, *Evacuation of Building and Grounds*. Upon evacuation, all windows and doors should be left open to minimize shock damage in case of a blast. In the event of an act that involves hazardous materials (chemical or biological) follow the procedure outlined below.

Hazardous Materials

Many hazardous materials do not have a taste or odor. Some materials can be detected because they cause physical reactions such as watering eyes or nausea. On or Off-Site evacuation may be necessary.

Process for dealing with a Contamination from a Hazardous Substance:

- Clear immediate area (evacuate building, if necessary, using fire exits).
- Call Fire Department hazardous Materials Response Team at 911.
- Do not walk into or touch any spilled substance.
- Cover mouth and nose with a cloth while leaving contaminated area.

Follow the evacuation procedures for either on-site or off-site evacuation. If necessary, follow the On-site Central Location Lock Down.

A. Chemical Agents

Chemical agents are poisonous gases, liquid or solids that have toxic effects on people, animals or plants. Severity of injury due to chemical agents depends upon the type and the amount of chemical agent used, as well as the duration of exposure. Were a chemical agent attack to occur, school authorities would instruct staff and students to seek shelter where they are and to seal the premises or to evacuate immediately.

B. Biological Agents

Biological agents are organisms or toxins that have illness-producing effects on people, livestock and crops. Because they cannot necessarily be detected, it may be impossible to know that a biological attack has occurred. Were a geological attack to occur, school authorities would instruct staff and students to seek shelter where they are and to seal the premises or to evacuate immediately. Follow the procedure for **On-site Central Location Lock Down**.

The Crisis Action Team (CAT) will handle all emergency response and organization.

Joint Information Center (JIC)

During a crisis, it is important to establish a central place of operations for students and administrative staff. Westside School will meet at Shorewood Christian School on 28th Ave in West Seattle. The student body will be added to classrooms or released to parents, if requested. The basement area will house school operations. Emergency management groups; firefighters, police, state and local agencies, school leadership and the communication team will work together to assess and manage emergency from this location.



Communication Team Strategies:

(Communication Tasks)

In the event of an emergency, Westside School provides responsive communication through dedicated channels. Depending on stakeholder involvement levels, first and second response messaging will be authorized. The Crisis Communication Team (CCT) is responsible for providing information and updates during and after the event. The team is listed below.

No emergency event is alike but we have identified and prepared for known concerns. Emergency messaging has been arranged and will be altered for audience, event response, and timeliness as needed. Listed below are some the key communication channels utilized at Westside School. As a school, we know our stakeholders are directly affected by an emergency emotionally as well as financially. Our goal is to communicate clearly, honestly, directly and with empathy to our families, students, staff, and others in an appropriate manner.

The Crisis Communication Team is responsible for empathic communication to stakeholders:

Crisis Communication Team (CCT)

Crisis Communication Team Leader: The CCT Leader is responsible for delivering key messaging to the media and stakeholders. The CCT Leader will be available for public comment and will be at command center site for updates.

Crisis Communication Team Coordinator:

The CCT Coordinator will work with the CCT Leader to insure that the key messaging is promoted through social media channels and will assist the CCT leader with overall communication preparation and facilitation.

If the CCT leader is not present or unable to fulfill public communication duties, the coordinator will act as communication representative for Westside School.

CCT Communications Director: Sara Billings

(H: 206-762-6812 C: 206-715-4533)

CCT Communications Coordinator: Jessica Day (C: 206-326-5125)

Westside School Stakeholders

At Westside School, the term **stakeholder** typically refers to anyone who is invested in the welfare and success of a school and its students, including administrators, teachers, staff members, students, parents, families, community members, local business leaders, and elected officials such as school board members, city counselors, and state representatives. Stakeholders may also be collective entities, such as local businesses, organizations, advocacy groups, committees, media outlets, and cultural institutions, in addition to organizations that represent specific groups, parent-teacher organizations, principals, school boards, or teachers in specific academic disciplines.

In the event of an emergency, this is the process for contacting our stakeholders.

- Identify emergency
- Contact Head of School
- CCT Team activates- engages communication methods
- Create Incident Fact Sheet
- Prepare Media response sheet
- Prep Spokesperson
- Follow-up and Review incident

Stakeholder- Primary	Stakeholder- Secondary
Board of Trustees	Seattle Public Schools
Families	Local & National Media
School Administrators	Business & Community Members
Faculty & Staff	Emergency Response
Students	Alumni Association
WPO- Westside parent organization	Local & State Policymakers
Volunteers	NWAIS- Accreditation Board

Method of Communication	Goals
BrightArrow Voice Dialer, email, phone	Rally to action, mobilization
Phone, text, email, face to face	Clarification & Facts
PA system announcement, email, phone	Calming reassurance language
Email, school website, social media	Recovery assistance and support
School website, phone, email, print	Resources, information, clarification
Media	Reporting, official statements

Spokesperson Responsibilities/Media Relations

The spokeperson for Westside School will be the primary conduit for information to our stakeholders and community at large. In order to be effective in this role during a time of crisis, the spokesperson needs to maintain empathy, establish a rapport with the audience and demonstrate openness and transparency. Our stakeholders are very invested in the health of the school community and will be anxious for news and direction. The spokeperson will engage with the stakeholders as well as release information to the public. This role represents Westside School through its mission and commitment to the student body. The spokeperson will repsonsible for speaking with the media and deliver key messaging. Below are listed some Do's and Don't's for the spokesperson. Training and planning is key to being prepared for any potential emergency situations.

Do:

- Establish and appropriate level of concern and empathy
- * Remain calm and acknowledge uncertainity
- Demonstate openness and transparency
- Give anticipatory guidance
- ❖ Be regrettful, not defensive
- * Be willing to address the 'what if' questions
- Give people things to do
- ❖ Have a clear purpose and state and restate core message
- Come to interview with back-up information for media
- Always reasure the audience of Westside School's commitment to care and security of all of its community.
- ❖ Always respond with professionally concerned and aware language

Don't:

- Avoid cliches, jargon and one liners
- Don't let reporters put words in your mouth
- Understand there is no such thing as "off the record"
- Do not argue or concede to hypothetical questions
- Avoid wearing patterns, stripes, neckties and checks on camera, it will be distracting and look unprofessional.
- Don't lose your temper, remember the intention is to gather support while providing relevant information to the public.
- Don't pretend to have all of the answers- Drive audience back to school website for updates



Sara Billings
Director of Communication
206.948.7745
206.935.2813

info@westsideschool.org

www.westsideschool.org

(Use this form as a template for press releases)

(Headline) School wide evacuation at Westside School

Seattle, Washington - March 26, 2015

Westside School in West Seattle has been evacuated due to potentially lethal chemical leak on school property. Students have been advised to remain at home until further notice. The safety of our Westside School community is paramount.

Emergency responders are on site and will secure the building before faculty, parents, staff and children are allowed back to school.

Here is what we know so far:

- A) There is no confirmed damage to the building
- B) There are no confirmed injuries

If you are experiencing any issues or would like to seek treatment, please contact 911.

We will provide further information as it becomes available through BrightArrow, Westside School website, Facebook and Twitter social accounts.

For more information, please contact Sara Billings at 206.948.7745

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Local and National Media List:

Purpose: In the event of an emergency, Westside School's Crisis Communication Team (CCT) will be responsible for notifying and engaging with the media. Only through preparation and a coordinated plan is a CCT member allowed to use this list. All contact must be authorized and logged for future reporting. The CCT spokesperson is the Director of Communication, Sara Billings; she will be the primary contact for all public information related to Westside School.

MEDIA	WEBSITE	EMAIL	PHONE	TWITTER
West Seattle Blog	westseattleblog.com	editor@westseattleblog.com	206.293.6302	@westseattleblog
Seattle Times	www.seattletimes.com	citydesk@seattlepi.com	206.448.8030	@seattletimes
West Seattle Herald	www.westseattleherald.com		206.932.0300	@westseattleher
KPLU 88.5 FM	www.kplu.org	news@kplu.org	800.677.5758	@KPLU
KIRO 97.3 FM	kiroradio.com	newsdesk@973kiro.com	206.726.5476	@KIRORadio
KEXP 90.3 FM	www.kexp.org		206.520.5800	@KEXP
KBCS 91.3 FM	<u>kbcs.fm</u>	news@kbcs.fm	425.564.6195	@KBCS
KUOW 94.9 FM	kuow.org	newsroom@kuow.org	206.685.1136	@KUOW
KOMO TV 4	www.komonews.com	tips@komo4news.com	1.888.477.5000	@komonews
KIRO TV 7	www.kirotv.com	newstips@kirotv.com	206.728.7777	@KIRO7Seattle
KING 5	www.king5.com		206.448.5555	@KING5Seattle

MEDIA	WEBSITE	EMAIL	PHONE	TWITTER
ABC	www.abc.com	news@abc.com		@ABC
NBC	www.nbc.com	news@nbc.com		@NBC
CBS	www.cbs.com	news@cbs.com		@CBS
CNN	www.cnn.com	newsource@cnn.com	206-567-8901	@CNN



Social Media Plan

Westside School recognizes that our community of stakeholders utilizes social media for information, engagement, and resource acquisition. In the event of an emergency, Westside School will provide responsive communication through its dedicated social media channels. Westside hosts several social sites including Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. Utilizing social media enables us to communicate in real time to our community through social and mobile devices. The goal with this social media plan is to create a process for utilizing these resources while understanding how to relate information most effectively.

Uses for messaging through our social sites:

- Provide immediate and essential information
- Responding to rumors
- Creating a sense of connectedness
- Developing trust and conversation with community
- School wide updates & news
- Call to action (asking for stakeholder assistance)
- Provide community resources and links to stakeholders and partners
- Sharing messaging from trusted sources
- Promote preparedness (help and resources for parents, staff, faculty and students)

It is the policy of the school to assign a dedicated social media communicator as administrator on all social accounts. This is to streamline updating and avoid duplicate information form being published. The Communications Director is the primary contact for all communication and in the event that this person is unable to provide timely information, the Communications Coordinator will fulfill these duties. All messaging, updates, and information is vetted by the Crisis Communication Team to create consistent phrasing through all communication channels.

In the event of an emergency, this is the process for contacting our stakeholders.

- Identify emergency
- Contact Head of School
- CCT Team mobilizes- employs communication methods
- Initiates social media plan
- Formulates Media response sheet
- Prepare Spokesperson: Director of Communication
- Follow-up and Review incident

The Crisis Communication Team is responsible for empathic social communication

Social Media Forums:

Facebook Page: Westside School (Seattle, WA.)

Westside School Facebook page is the primary social media tool. Content includes daily updates, registration information, class projects, school news, and parent resources. Engaging information about capital campaign progress and advancement requests. In the event of an emergency, Facebook is to be used for updates, rumor control, essential information, as well as links to trusted resources.

Twitter: @WestsideSeattle

Twitter is the first communication source for crisis communication. This immediate forum will send alerts to stakeholder communities, provide essential direction and be updated hourly. On a daily basis Twitter will connect Facebook and Westside website pages to create 'teaser' messages that highlights school identity and related communication. Tag all messaging with #WestsideSeattle for proper posting.

LinkedIn School Page:

Westside School's company page should be used to connect with alumni, staff, parents, board members, and other stakeholders for the promotion of school communication agenda. It is a great resource for displaying the development of the school, attracting potential talent, and posting advancement messaging.



Training & Review

Crisis Training for Westside School team leaders will be scheduled annually and/or as part of the new hire orientation. Head of School, Board Regent member and Communication Team Leader, will provide training and follow-up. Emergency preparedness can also come from partner organizations and local stakeholders including; fire and police departments, public health agencies, media relations' partners, and school district representatives. Westside School will also participate in crisis training exercises as organized by subject matter experts. The goal of this plan and training is for the preparation, timely organization, and evaluation of Westside School's emergency and public communication response.

Agreements and Signatures:

A member of the Crisis Action Team and Crisis Communication Team along with a Board of Regents member will review this Emergency Plan yearly.

Head of School

	Director of Communications		
		Board o	of Regents representative
Plan Revision Date	Name of Reviser	Approved By	Notes