

School Crisis Response Planning: Key Steps to Take

1. Mobilize your Response Planning Team.

This team, led by the school superintendent, should be comprised of all the district's leadership team. That includes all directors, covering IT, building and grounds, nutrition, finance, early childhood education and principals. This team leads the development of a Districts Response Plan for the pandemic, typically with the support of a series of action teams focused on key components.

2. Set a meeting schedule for the Response Team.

During any crisis, the Response Team meets at least weekly to discuss updates and makes the necessary decisions. Establish a weekly schedule that is aligned with state updates. In the case of COVID-19, it may mean your superintendent and school nurse participate in the weekly calls from the Minnesota Department of Health, the team meets later in the day to review and any major updates are communicated to staff, your board and then parents in a timely manner or during your already established communication cycle.

3. Establish central communication site.

Publish a web page on your district's website that includes all the necessary information for parents and your community. This should be the first place information is updated. Keep it succinct and easy to navigate. Multiple pages may be needed to achieve this.

All communications, via social media, email or phone, should direct your community to this site. Make the URL easy (For example: districtdetails.edu/covid) and add at least a sentence on COVID and a link to the page on the district's home page.

4. Establish communication to parents.

Expect to communicate with parents at least 1-2 times a week. Determine a standard time you will update parents each week, likely at the end of the week to provide timely information on what's happening, what's changing and what to expect. Provide major updates that are more urgent as needed.

Share any communications that will go out to parents with all of your staff and board before sending them to parents (at least 30-60 minutes in advance). Staff communications likely will be more frequent than parent communications.

Keep a rolling record of this communication, including date sent, topic of message (linked to actual message) and to whom it was sent.

5. Keep Refining Plans

Continue to develop and refine your response plans – on paper. Focus on how you can be proactive, look ahead and anticipate what may be needed next. Set aside time each week (or more often as needed depending on the circumstance) to list Positives (What's working?) and Deltas (What improvements are needed?). Discuss what actions need to be taken and keep a record for your District's Crisis Plan.

Delivering Distance Learning for an extended period of time is a new concept for most schools. See steps to take and key questions to consider to develop your district's plan at

MREAvoice.org/covid19

