



# Communicating in Uncertain Times

## Crisis Command Center

*For Education Leaders*

These are unpredictable times for parents, students and educators. It is particularly challenging for educators to communicate accurately when Covid19 adaptations are continually evolving. Therefore, your communications need also to be based on the fundamental priorities of public education and your schools, regardless of the setting and/or time frame within which those priorities will be achieved. Following are some tips for communication success in conjunction with unprecedented adaptations:

- Repeatedly affirm your school district's mission, vision and goals using every available format and at every opportunity. It is crucial for your constituents to know that although the mode of delivery of education may change, the commitment to student success does not. This will not only bolster the confidence of your stakeholders but it will also help them to adapt to the changes the situation may demand.
- Describe the precautions that will be implemented district-wide to ensure healthy outcomes for students, staff and communities.
- Encourage all stakeholders to be flexible about the structure of teaching and learning for the safety of everyone.
- Ensure that all students have equal access to learning.
- Provide ongoing acknowledgement, expectations, and support to teachers.
- Express confidence that working together we can continue to provide world-class learning opportunities.
- Set clear expectations for staff and workshop with them (virtually or in person as the situation demands) about regularly communicating to parents and students the following:
  1. Their commitment to the mission and vision of the school district
  2. The specific academic and curricular goals for the semester
  3. The precautions that are, and will be, implemented to aid the personal safety of staff and students
  4. Expectations for students and opportunities for parents
  5. The best method/times to reach teachers

A survey\* conducted during the spring of 2020 by the University of Minnesota Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement and responded to by over 13,000 educators, identifies four recurring themes:

### **Relationships Matter**

Educators' number one worry is relationship building and the ability to socially connect and engage with students and families.

### **Technology is Important**

Technology is a significant concern for educators. It was the most frequently mentioned topic in the qualitative responses in the areas of needed supports and professional development.

### **Educators are Worried**

Educators are significantly worried about many factors related to learning in the 2020-2021 school year, from how they will build relationships in distance learning to how they will be able to stay healthy in in-person learning.

### **Learning Occurred for Educators**

While distance learning presented many challenges, educators also reported that there were lessons learned and skills acquired that they will carry with them into whatever the fall brings, and eventually their classrooms.

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\*This information was taken from a brief summary of the survey data collected and synthesized by the Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement in the College of Education and Human Development at the University of Minnesota. For further information see the full report at [cehd.umn.edu/research/distance-learning/](http://cehd.umn.edu/research/distance-learning/) or contact Kim Gibbons ([kgibbons@umn.edu](mailto:kgibbons@umn.edu)) or Katie Pekel ([kpekel@umn.edu](mailto:kpekel@umn.edu)).

Separate information on *Building Developmental Relationships During the Covid-19 Crisis* is available at [www.search-institute.org/development-relationships/](http://www.search-institute.org/development-relationships/)

## **TIMELY TIPS FOR PARENTS**

- ❖ Identify a specific study space with limited distractions for student(s).
- ❖ Set a study time for students; depending on whether their learning is virtual, hybrid or in-person.
- ❖ Monitor your student's study time daily.
- ❖ Ask your student(s) about what they learned each day and monitor progress.
- ❖ Read all communications from the school district and classroom teacher.
- ❖ Communicate your questions and/or concerns to the classroom teacher.



These materials are provided by  
**The Minnesota Association of School Administrators**

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