

## September 2020 Restart Communications Plan Template

Development of a clear and comprehensive communications plan is an essential component of service planning during a pandemic. Strong lines of direct communication can significantly help to reduce stress and increase trust within the school community.

Independent school authorities should develop and regularly update their communication plans in collaboration with their regional health authority, First Nations, the Metis Nation, Indigenous communities, and unions as applicable.

**School Name:**

**Ministry School Number:**

**Contact Name:**

**Contact Email:**

### **ROUTINE COMMUNICATIONS**

1. Process for communicating with parents/caregivers, including those who are homeschooling. Include the name and position of the person primarily responsible for developing and managing communications.

Communication planning seeks to engage all students and their parents and/or caregivers in a timely fashion.

- Prior to school restarting, staff will be reaching out to parents through frequent update letters from the Executive Director, personal meetings, phone calls and emails to explain the plan for the school year.
- On a weekly basis, staff will use emails and cell phone numbers from our medical permission forms and student files to contact parents regarding and alert them to changes due to Ministry of Education and/or FISA guidelines, or to Provincial Health's COVID-19 policies
- Our Facebook page and website are another resource for parents and students to access updated information.

The person primarily responsible for developing and managing communications at the Burnaby location is the Executive Director Dr. Robert Kissner.

2. Guidance given to staff regarding the sharing of information beyond that which pertains to the individual student or class learning.

Staff sharing of information beyond that which pertains to the individual or class learning is rooted in the Personal Information Protection Act, and reflects our vision of always striving to create a safe, respectful environment, and to building community. Sharing of information also reflects the British Columbia Teachers' Federation Personal Responsibility and Code of Ethics as well as the Canadian Association of Social Workers Code of Conduct which we maintain as a CARF accredited agency. All staff read material and must complete a multiple choice questionnaire ensuring that they understand the appropriate boundaries to communication and to ensuring that content is appropriate. In the event of a student or staff member becoming ill, including if they display symptoms of COVID 19, we will not be providing notification to staff or students' families unless directed to do so by Public Health. Most importantly, the fact that our group sizes are only 10-12 students, and each group has both an educator and a youth worker, means that this pairing of responsibility for communication with families avoids the possibility of inappropriate communication or behavior.

3. Protocols that are in place for responding to inaccurate information circulating within our school community.

Both educators and youth workers have communication rapport with all our youth and families which is maintained throughout the school year. Those relationships, together with our small size, means that we become aware of inaccurate or misleading information quickly and respond quickly by providing fact-based clarification and responses quickly through group or individual meetings with youth, emails and phone calls to families, or in person meetings with families. Any misleading or inaccurate information is dealt with immediately and the Program Manager is informed. Any incidents beyond any small group are dealt with by the Program Manager who would reach out to families and caregivers as appropriate. For more serious situations matters will be referred to the Executive Director who is able to consult with other experienced professionals as needed. These matters are also considered by our Performance Management Council including the directors of both sites, the Executive Director and staff representatives from both schools.

4. Outline of schedule of direct communications to parents/caregivers and staff (consider higher frequency during the initial key transition phases and then shifting to a less frequent but regular schedule thereafter).

During the period leading up to the re-start of school we will reach out at least weekly to parents and caregivers in order to keep them apprised of plans for welcoming their youth back in September. This pattern of weekly communication will continue at least for the month of September when it will be critical to reassure families that good policies and practices are in place. This weekly communication will be gently eased off as the school term continues unless it becomes necessary to once again ramp up the frequency.

5. We label communication to the school community as “for information” or “for action”.
- Yes
  - No (if no, provide an explanation of how communication types are distinguished)

YES

6. Process for providing up-to-date information on our school website. If you do not keep your website up-to-date explain the channels used to provide timely information to your school community.

Timely information is provided to our school community on an ongoing basis to our parents and caregivers through phone calls, emails, letters from Program Managers and the Executive Director and direct meetings. We are able to accomplish this due to the fact that we are able to provide one educator and youth worker to each student team of 10-12 youth which means we can very quickly connect with each individual on our team to provide information both to them and their families or caregivers.

7. Process for creating and distributing statements regarding confirmed or suspected cases of COVID-19 within the school community. Include your processes for obtaining local health authority approval prior to distribution to parents/caregivers, staff, and public.

It is important to understand that the high number of students and staff often away for reasons of normal colds and seasonal flus or fevers, headaches or other health challenges makes the lack of presence of any particular staff person or student normative.

However, we have a policy of communicating any case of COVID 19 within our community only through obtaining local Public Health Authority approval. If a staff or student in school is confirmed by a doctor, and then by Public Health to be COVID positive Public Health will work with our school administration to determine what actions should be taken, and if other staff and students' families or caregivers need to be informed.

8. The name of our Regional Health Authority primary contact, his/her phone number and email are known and written into our communication plan.
- Yes
  - No (If no, explain your process for connecting with Health Authority officials.)

YES.

9. Indigenous rightsholders have had the opportunity to provide input on our communication processes.
- Yes (If yes, provide a brief account of the process followed)
  - No
  - Not Applicable

NO. We have no need for any formal relationship with any formal Indigenous rightsholders. We have four First Nations Students and we have had personal one-to-one conversations with them around their expectations for service, safety and communications protocols, and have given them an opportunity to provide input into the entire Fall program as well as our communication process.

### **HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMUNICATION AND TRAINING ORIENTATION**

10. Process for clearly and consistently communicating guidelines from the Provincial Health Officer (PHO) and resources available for information on COVID-19 as needed. Include details regarding how infection prevention and exposure control measures are relayed in multiple formats for ease of understanding (e.g., visual representation, videos using sign language, translations, etc.)

Our staff returned on August 17th and have had a full three weeks to prepare for students entering the building. All staff have reviewed all materials from Public Health, The Ministry of Education and Work Safe BC. including the COVID-19 Public Health Guidance for K-12 School Settings communication and the BC Restart Plan. These resources were made available to all staff along with the BC COVID-19 Self Assessment Tool.

11. Process for early and ongoing health and safety orientation for **staff**. Including training on:

- The risk of exposure to COVID-19 and the signs and symptoms of the disease.
- Safe work procedures or instruction to be followed, including hand washing and cough/sneeze etiquette.
- How to report an exposure to or symptoms of COVID-19.
- Changes made to work policies, practices, and procedures due to the COVID- 19 pandemic and keep records of that training.

Our staff returned on August 17th and have had a full three weeks to prepare for students entering the building. All staff review all materials from Public Health, The Ministry of Education and Work Safe BC. and have watched videos on social distancing and infection control measures and protocols. All staff are aware that reporting confirmed infections means that Public Health will be notified and that it is they who then determine the school's response and communication protocols. As new information comes out, it is collated by the Program managers and presented immediately to staff in small group morning staff meetings.

12. COVID-19 related staff meetings are documented, and minutes of such meetings are posted in a central location.

- Yes
- No (if no, provide an explanation of how records of COVID-19 related meetings are kept and distributed)

13. Process for early and ongoing health and safety orientation **parents/caregivers**.

All parents and caregivers received information for appropriate health screening of their children in May prior to any return to school. New students and their parents and caregivers will receive the same information and this will be renewed and reviewed during the initiation of each child's IEP prior to starting on September 8.

14. Process for early and ongoing health and safety orientation for **students**.

changes in the weather, areas of building use, the resources that we have available, and public health directives. At the start of each morning as part of our normal learning group meeting prior to the start of the school day we share needed information on infection control procedures and this approach is further fortified during our morning van pick-ups prior to any student entering the vehicles.

15. As Per WorkSafeBC guidelines, frontline workers, join health and safety committees, and supervisors are involved in identifying protocols for our workplace. Health and Safety committees meet regularly, including prior to any transitions between stages, and are included in our school's planning efforts.

- Yes
- No (if no, provide an explanation of how health and safety protocols are identified and addressed)

YES

## COMMUNICATING WITH MEDIA

16. Name of the main spokesperson for our school:

17. Position (board chair, principal, head of school, etc.):

18. Name of secondary spokesperson (if applicable):

19. Position:

20. Protocols for screening, directing, and responding to media inquiries.

Summary: All media inquiries, whether verbal or written, are to be directed to the FocusBC Executive Director who will evaluate the request and answer or direct it as appropriate. Any media contact not made initially through the Executive Director should be immediately reported to them. Executive Director will consult with appropriate Health Authorities prior to release of any information. All media calls regarding confirmed or suspected COVID-19 cases, potential exposure at our school or potential risk of transmission within our school setting are directed to the regional health authority. These calls will be directed by the FocusBC Executive Director, Dr. Robert Kissner: 778-240-4319.

Specific Policy:  
Protocol for Media Request on COVID-19 Case(s)

1. Staff are informed: "A reporter, producer, or other news media may contact you regarding confirmed or suspected COVID-19 cases, potential exposure at our school or potential risk of transmission within our school setting".
2. All media calls regarding COVID-19 must be referred to the FocusBC Executive Director. Staff are informed " Please do not say "you are not allowed to talk to a (reporter or have to get permission to do so". Instead, tell the reporter: "The FocusBC WALC School policy is to refer all media inquiries to our Executive Director Dr. Robert Kissner. You can reach him at 778-240-4319."
3. Any media inquiry that must be made outside of normal business hours will also be directed to the FocusBC Executive Director, Dr. Robert Kissner: 778-240-4319
4. The Executive Director must direct all calls regarding confirmed or suspected COVID-19 cases, potential exposure at our school or potential risk of transmission within our school setting to the regional health authority for response. Any information, ever discussed or released by the Executive Director will be and is in concert with the Privacy and Information Laws of BC and The Ministries of Education, Health and WorkSafe BC.

21. Communication plan includes a stipulation that media requests regarding confirmed or suspected COVID-19 cases, potential exposure at our school or potential risk of transmission within our school setting are directed to the regional health authority for response.

- Yes
- No (if no, provide an explanation of how such media requests are managed)

YES

22. Process for keeping the Ministry informed of significant events and associated communications to school communities related to COVID-19. Communications can be directed to the Ministry by email at [educ.covid@gov.bc.ca](mailto:educ.covid@gov.bc.ca) or by phone at 236-478-2712.

Program Coordinators will consult with the Executive Director and the Ministry will be informed of significant events as they occur and as we are directed to do so by Public Health. Communications will be directed to the Ministry by email at [educ.covid@gov.bc.ca](mailto:educ.covid@gov.bc.ca) or by phone to 236-478-2712

23. Other aspects of our communication plan not addressed above.