

Mailing: PO Box 8600, Charlottetown
Prince Edward Island
C1A 7M4
Civic: 229 Shakespeare Drive
Stamford PE C1B 2V8
Tel: (902) 368-6960
Fax: (902) 368-6960

Eastern School District

www.eduprince.ca

May 20, 2009

Dr. Bill Whelan
Prince Edward Island Home and School Federation
P.O. Box 1012
Charlottetown, PE, C1A 7M4

Dear Dr. Whelan:

We appreciate that the PEI Home and School Federation closely reviewed our proposed lockdown policy and procedures, and provided suggestions for improvement before the documents went to the May Board meeting for second reading.

The comments from your organization were the second response the district received requesting more emphasis on school-parent communication in the policy/procedures, and staff examined the proposed policy to identify where that component could be strengthened. The three revisions you suggested to the proposed procedures provided clarity and strengthened school-parent communication, and the draft was changed to include your recommendations. The second and final reading of the Lockdown Response Plan policy occurred at the May 12, 2009 public board meeting.

When a procedure deals with a serious safety issue impacting our students directly, the District must fully consider the information we can share publicly. There is a fine line between open communication and providing too much detail. We know from other jurisdictions, that specific emergency response information on school websites has helped the "bad guys", allowing them easy access to schools by providing technical information and school layouts. Although parents must be well aware of the purpose and common procedures around lockdown, it will be necessary to keep specific procedural information more closely guarded.

Staff has drafted an "Administrators Package to Support Lockdown Policy and Procedures." This will be shared with administrators at the August Principals' Meeting, for implementation in the 2009-2010 school year. This package provides school principals with the following support documents which will help them improve school-parent communication:

- District School Lockdown Response Plan Template, 2009 (to be completed by individual schools). **Please share with parents since it provides no specific tactical information.**

Excellence in Education

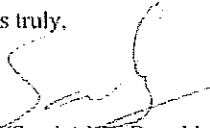
- Background Information on SAFE (School Action for Emergencies). Please send to parents or post on school website.
- Sample letter for distribution to Parents. Please send to parents or post on school website
- Quick Reference Guide for School Administrators/Staff - This outlines the chronology of a lockdown. Schools are encouraged to share it with parents and post to the website if appropriate.
- Staff Information-" Talking to Students about Lockdown". Please share these suggestions with your school-parent group, and determine appropriate distribution.
- National Association of School Psychologists -*Talking to Children About Violence -Tips for Parents and Staff* (can't be photocopied because of copyright laws). Schools may paraphrase content and direct parents requesting more information to www.nasponline.org.

The district template is common to all schools, and easily accessed. However, for security reasons we will ask principals to share their specific lockdown response plans only with school staff, the police and the school district. To share the full plan would be imprudent and could put students, staff and visitors at risk. School staff will be encouraged to discuss with parents concerns about student actions in particular circumstances: in the library, in the washroom, or outside, for example. To avoid a rush of parents to the school in an actual lockdown situation, all parents will be informed where the Parent Staging Area will be established. They will go there for updates on the unfolding situation at their school.

As we move closer to full implementation in our schools, additional supports may be added to this package. Guidance counsellors and psychologists are also a very good source of information for parents, and both groups have been provided online links, to relevant websites.

Thank you for your comments and interest in this important topic.

Yours truly,



Alex (Sandy) MacDonald, Superintendent of Schools

cc. Trustees
District leadership Team
Craig Clark