

February 16, 2016

Dear Parents and Guardians:

Subject: Explaining the Emergency “Lockdown” Procedure and Practice Drills

Over the course of the 2015/2016 school year, the North Vancouver School District has undertaken a review of our emergency lockdown procedures in partnership with the R.C.M.P. and the North Shore Emergency Management Office. This month, we will proceed to enacting practice lockdown drills at each of our schools that include the participation of all students and staff. The common date for schools to practice lockdown drills will be during the afternoon of February 25th. There are some schools that have unforeseen reasons why they cannot do the lockdown drill on this day, and those schools will relay the new date to their school community.

In preparing this communication, we realize that even the mention of the word “lockdown” introduces an unwelcome thought and raises questions and concerns. On page 2 of this letter, please find a series of Questions & Answers to further explain what a “lockdown” means and our procedures for addressing this scenario, however unlikely, in our schools.

We realize that an actual lockdown scenario is intensely stressful for everyone involved. One of the most common reactions in parents is to be able to reach their child by cellphone. However, as is explained in the Q & A, cellphone communication can put individuals who find themselves in a lockdown situation at greater risk. For this reason, we ask all parents for their cooperation in respecting the law enforcement directive prohibiting the use of cellphones by staff and students during a lockdown.

In the North Vancouver School District, we recognize our responsibility towards the safety of students and staff on our premises at all times. While the incidence of threatening behaviours in our schools is very, very low, we hope you will find this knowledge of our procedures to be reassuring. Please don't hesitate to discuss this information with your school principal or contact me directly with any questions you may have.

Sincerely,



Brad Baker
District Principal
Safe and Caring Schools



“Lockdown” Procedure and Practice Drills

Questions & Answers

What is a “school lockdown”?

A lockdown is an emergency procedure designed to protect occupants from external harm or contain the movement of occupants when an intruder, or a restricted weapon, is present in the building. In a school lockdown, only emergency response teams from law enforcement will enter the school. A “lockdown” means that people must stay where they are and cannot leave until escorted outside by response personnel.

Are there different procedures depending upon the situation?

Yes. There are three different distinctions of “lockdown” that direct how a situation will be addressed:

Level 1 – The danger is present inside the school

Level 2 – The threat is close to, but not inside the building

Level 3 – The risk is in the surrounding area.

How are school staff prepared to handle a lockdown situation?

School-based staff are trained in how to recognize and respond to all three lockdown scenarios.

Why do children have to practise a lockdown drill? Isn't that creating a stressful situation?

Particularly in emergency situations, we are all more confident, less anxious, and better able to cope when we know there is a plan in place. An essential part of the lockdown drill in our schools is for staff to lead conversations about the experience afterwards to reassure students and help them develop new coping and self-calming techniques for the future.

May I communicate with my child during a lockdown?

It's expected that many parents will feel an urgent need to contact their child in a lockdown situation. However, any sound from a cellphone during a lockdown can bring awareness to the presence of an individual or group, placing them, and everyone in their vicinity, at greater risk. For this reason, students and staff are not permitted to use cellphones during a lockdown situation.

Communications both in and out of a school under lockdown are restricted to law enforcement personnel and their designates—including school principals and school district senior administrators.

During a school lockdown, where can I learn more information?

Recognizing that telephone reception could quickly become overwhelmed by a high volume of calls in a lockdown situation, the School District will update its website as information is released to us through the R.C.M.P.