

## Best Practices for COVID-related Communications

- Always emphasize the safety and health of students, staff and community.
- Contact the county health department for guidance about what you should do to ensure students and staff are safe. Include its guidance in the communication when possible. Building a relationship with the county health department in advance will help when you must address an urgent issue.
- Stay informed about local, state and federal health recommendations, and be attentive to the number of COVID-19 cases in your community and the state.
- Encourage all audiences to continue to follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines to protect themselves, including frequent handwashing, staying home when sick, social distancing in public and wearing a cloth mask when social distancing is not possible.
- Protect the identity of the individual(s) involved in the situation.
- Use language that is honest, but also calming and reassuring.
- Ensure parents and community members know you will communicate with them frequently and transparently so they can make the best health-related decisions for their families.
- Verify if the person who has tested positive or has been exposed has been in contact with students or staff or has been on school grounds during the incubation period of 14 days. It is important to clarify this either way in your communication.
- If it is necessary to reschedule or postpone an event, explain to parents and the community when they will receive an update from the school district. If you have established a back-up plan, communicate the details of the plan.
- Acknowledge the disappointment students will have if events and programs are interrupted as a result of a COVID-19 risk. Empathy is important.
- Communicate with those most directly impacted first, followed by staff, parents and students, then the general public.
- Consider using a phone message or video to provide a more personal touch to announcements, especially if the news may be emotional or concerning for families.

Call or email the OSBA Communications Team anytime you have a question or need assistance with messaging.

