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Reading Public Schools

Instilling a joy of learning and inspiring the innovative leaders of tomorrow

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Dear Reading Public School Families:

Each year, we review, revise, and update our safety and emergency plans to align with current best practices. During this pandemic, we need to broaden our safety and emergency procedures to include both in person and remote learning. As part of this review process, we would like to inform you of some specific guidelines that will affect you and your child. Attending to your child's safety in school is of greatest importance to our school district. Our response procedures are reviewed regularly so that we can make prompt and responsible decisions in the event of an emergency. The purpose of this letter is to review some of our routine procedures. Please read this information so that you will be aware of our safety efforts, and know what you should do in case of emergency.

Please help us in the following ways:

- Update your portal information. If you are currently on the portal, you will or may have already received an email to update your demographic and contact information.
- Keep medical information on file for your child up-to-date. It is very important that you notify the school nurse of any health or medication changes.
- Keep all emergency contact information current and inform the school secretary if there are changes in your cell, office or home phone numbers.
- If you have not done so already, **register for your family District Portal account** so that you may access this site for information if needed, and make sure that your email address is up-to-date.
- During an emergency, please do not call the school. Telephone lines need to be kept open for emergency calls. We will keep you notified through our Blackboard Connect and Edline notification systems.
- Cooperate with visitor sign-in and identification procedures at all times. **During the pandemic, we will not be allowing visitors in our schools. If you are picking up your child during school hours, we will bring your child to the front entrance. Please have proper identification available.**
- In an emergency situation, do not immediately drive to the school. Access routes may not be open, and additional traffic will interfere with safety procedures and put students at risk. Refer to the listed radio and television stations and our Connect Ed message system for instructions and emergency information.
- Please have your family review and practice responses to emergency situations at home, including instructions that your child should following the event of an early dismissal if you are not at home.
- Subscribe to our social media tools that we will also use to keep you updated. They are as follows:
 - Superintendent's Blog- <https://readingsuperintendent.wordpress.com/>
 - Twitter Account- @ReadingSchools
 - Facebook-<https://www.facebook.com/Readingpublicschools>
- Please give us any feedback on our safety and security procedures and how we can improve.

Off-Site Evacuation/Dismissal Policy:

In an extreme emergency when a school has been evacuated and it is not possible to return, an off-site meeting place may be needed. Parents will be directed (through BLACKBOARD CONNECT) to go to a designated reunification center in the community. The Superintendent, with public safety personnel, will determine the location that best meets the needs of the specific emergency, and staff will be on site to assist with dismissal procedures using the following guidelines:

- No student will be dismissed from a primary or secondary evacuation site unless a parent (or individual designated by a parent on the Pupil Information Card) comes for him/her and is able to present photo ID upon request.

- All parents or designated persons who come for students will be required to sign out at the front office (or from a designated alternate release location in certain emergencies).
- In addition to the above notification sources, signs will be posted if an alternate location is needed.

Throughout the school year your child will be trained in emergency procedures. **During the pandemic, we will continue to hold fire drills and intruder drills in accordance with Massachusetts General Law and DESE regulations.** Schools may have a full school evacuation drills this year to an offsite location. Our secondary schools may have a canine search of lockers, public areas, some classrooms, and the parking lot as part of the School Committee Search Policy. Students will learn how to react, where to assemble, and what to expect in an emergency situation. While it can be unsettling to think about situations that require emergency response, frequent review and practice will reduce hazards and help everyone to be prepared in an actual event.

HEALTH, SAFETY AND EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS:

In an emergency, we will make every effort to keep you informed so that you will understand the situation, what is being done in response, and any instructions for families. Information will be disseminated in many ways, including:

- Broadcast on local cable and television stations
- District BLACKBOARD CONNECT notification system (See separate form for more details)
- District website (<https://www.reading.k12.ma.us/>)
- Automated telephone, email, and text messaging via BLACKBOARD CONNECT
- Reading Public Schools Facebook Page (<https://www.facebook.com/Readingpublicschools>)
- Reading Public Schools Twitter (@ReadingSchools)

When providing phone numbers for emergency contact, please provide us with phone numbers without extensions. If possible, list only lines and cell phones that will be answered by you or a person that you have authorized to pick up your child in an emergency. Be sure to inform your co-workers if you have listed your place of employment as an emergency contact number, and inform the school(s) if any of your contact information changes throughout the year.

EVACUATION:

The need to evacuate students from a building before the regularly scheduled dismissal time could arise from a relatively minor incident such as a power failure, or from a major event such as fire or bomb threat. During evacuation, students are guided to the nearest exit and assemble at an established location. Communication into the school, dismissal times and transportation may be temporarily disrupted. Families will receive information and instructions from the listed communication sources.

ENHANCED LOCKDOWN OR SHELTER-IN-PLACE:

Enhanced Lockdown Active Shooter Drills (A.L.I.C.E.) or shelter-in-place is implemented when it has been determined that conditions outside of the classroom or building are potentially unsafe. Situations that may activate an enhanced lockdown/sheltering response include a hazardous materials situation near the school, police activity close by, or potential intruder alerts. While enhanced lockdowns are extremely rare, enhanced lockdown drills are conducted periodically to ensure that staff members and students are prepared to respond confidently and calmly. During an enhanced lockdown drill, as with an actual event, students and staff remain quietly in a designated location within the room or are guided to a secure location either inside or outside of the school to wait for the “All Clear” signal. It is possible, based on the situation, that students will evacuate the school to a predetermined location. It is not possible for anyone to enter or exit the building until an “All Clear” signal is given by the principal or public safety official. Information concerning the lockdown is given to families through the listed communication sources.

EARLY OR DELAYED DISMISSAL DUE TO INCLEMENT WEATHER:

In severe weather or similar emergencies when travel conditions are expected to deteriorate, it may be necessary to take the precaution of an early dismissal, or to delay dismissal until conditions improve. You will be informed of modified dismissal times through the communication sources listed above.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact your building principal or the Reading Public Schools Administrative Offices.

Have a healthy, safe, and productive school year.

Sincerely,

John F. Doherty, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools