



Colorado Association of School Boards

Crisis Communication: Prepare for the Unexpected

Every school district should have a **written plan for communicating during a crisis**, and then with good fortune, never have to use it. In the context of public relations, a crisis could include such situations as a group of angry citizens, student protest, personnel issue, weather event, a school shooting or any number of other events that affect students, the schools or the district as a whole. Obviously in any crisis, the safety and security of students and staff are paramount. But also, the manner in which a crisis is handled directly affects the district's reputation.

The most important factor in maintaining a good reputation in a difficult situation is how well the school district communicates year-round. Relationships that are nurtured on an ongoing basis generally remain strong during a crisis. Staff and community members who are accustomed to receiving regular and trusted information from district leaders will turn to them for the facts during a crisis. A board should ensure that the superintendent has in place a written plan for communicating during a crisis. The plan should include such items as designated spokespersons, vehicles for communication, audiences who will receive communication and in what order, and guidelines for what information may be communicated.