

Writing Message Maps: How and Why?



How do you write a message map?

- Messages should be simple, timely, accurate, relevant, credible, consistent
- Keep it simple - 3 ideas per message
- 27-9-3 (27 words, 9-15 seconds, 3 key messages)
- Key messages: state most important first, then 3rd, then 2nd most important
- Create your short messages to immediately send to parents, staff, media as needed during a crisis

Why 27-9-3?

The Center for Risk Communication analyzed 10 years of print and media coverage of emergencies and crises in the US and found:

- Average length of a sound bite in print media is 27 words
- Average duration of a sound bite in broadcast media is 9 seconds
- Average number of messages reported in both print and broadcast media is 3.
- 140 character tweet takes about 9 seconds to say

Why should you use message maps?

Your goal is to create a bank of messages for all SRP actions that your team has vetted.

- Allows you to get information out quickly
- Keeps the spokesperson on message
- Provides consistency across your organization
- Helps manage rumors.

Example Messages:

- Ex. 1: Our students are safe. Yesterday law enforcement was made aware of a threat to the school. At this time authorities are handling the situation and are sharing information with us.
- Ex. 2: Police are investigating a reported threat to the school. All students are safe. Classes will continue as usual.
- Ex. 3: The safety of our students is our top priority. Therefore, school will not be in session today while police investigate a reported threat. We will provide updates as available.
- Ex. 4: [event] has prompted an evacuation of our school. Safety is our top priority. Be prepared to follow official instructions.
- Ex. 5: [Name] school is in lockdown. Student safety is our top priority. Stay away until the situation is resolved. More information to come.
- Ex. 6: [Name] school is in secure due to [event outside school]. Students are safe. More information to come.
- Ex. 7: Family reunification is underway at [location]. Bring your ID to check in. Your patience is appreciated.
- Ex. 8: Sheltering protocol is in effect at [name school] due to [event – briefly]. We will notify you when shelter is over.
- **Ex. 9:** Your child is safe. There was an incident at the elementary school. All students have been relocated to the high school. Details to come as they become available.
- Ex.10: The fire chief has prompted an evacuation of our school. Safety is our top priority. Be prepared to follow official instructions.
- Ex. 11: Family reunification is underway at [location]. Bring your ID to check in. Your patience is appreciated.
- Ex. 12: All students are safe. A problem with our boiler has prompted at 11:00 release. Buses will run accordingly; contact the school if you need alternate drop-off arrangements.
- Ex. 13: Safety is our top priority. Students have been evacuated to an alternate location. Once the situation has been assessed, the school will notify you of next steps.
- Ex. 14: Your BPS student is safe. A brief fire was located at the front of the elementary school. Elementary students were evacuated to the High school and are attending classes in that building. The fire is currently extinguished, but we are continuing to have Elementary Students stay at the High School.

- Ex. 15: Police are investigating a reported threat to the high school this morning. All students have been safely evacuated to the YMCA. Instructions for student pick up will be shared shortly.
- Ex. 16: Our students are safe. Law enforcement was made aware of a threat to the school. Initiation of family reunification procedures will be announced shortly.
- Ex. 17: All students have arrived safely at Saint Mary's cathedral at 913 W. 1st St. Please come to Saint Mary's on the east side to pick up your child. Thank you for your cooperation.
- EX. 18: Police are investigating a reported threat to the school. All students have been safely evacuated. Be prepared to follow official instructions for picking up your child.

Document created by the UNPPC for NDE School Safety which contains examples for each standard response protocol.