

February 16, 2017

Dear Parents/Guardians:

RE: Explaining emergency “lockdown” procedures and practice drills

Over the course of the 2016/2017 school year, the North Vancouver School District will continue to review our emergency lockdown procedures, in partnership with the RCMP, North Shore Emergency Management Office, students, and staff. This month, we will perform practice lockdown drills at each of our schools; these drills will include participation of all students and staff. The common date for schools to practice lockdown drills will be at 11:00 a.m. on February 28, 2017. There are some schools that are not able to 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. At the bottom of this letter, please find a series of Q&As 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 try to reach their children 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 do not 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 Q&A**

### 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 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 receive training in how to recognize and respond to all three lockdown scenarios.

### Why do children have to practice 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 lockdown drills 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 is expected that many parents will feel an urgent need to contact their child in a lockdown situation. However, any sound from a cellphone can alert an intruder 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 go for 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 ([www.sd44.ca](http://www.sd44.ca)) as information is released to us through the RCMP.