

September 2020

ONcall

ready-to-use NEWS

Sample school letter templates for issues related to COVID-19

By now, districts have sent out many communications to families because of COVID-19. States are providing guidance to school districts about requirements for reopening or required closing. Sample letters and communications resources may also be available to all districts from state authorities.

Fall is always a busy time for schools, and it is especially hectic now as conditions and recommendations continue to change. Ready-to-send letters with key messages and reassurances can help.

If your district doesn't already have sample letters for common situations, the attached letter templates can be revised quickly. They are addressed to parents from the school principal. Print them on school letterhead, modify them as needed and send with a principal's signature — or email them if that is standard practice. Replace any italicized text with school-specific information.

For subscription information, contact WSSDA at (800) 562-8927 or (360) 493-9231.

For content questions, contact: Marcia Latta Communications Consultant (503) 580-2612.

After they have been sent, post the key messages from the letters on school websites and social media sites.

The letter topics in this packet include:

- Notification of childcare closures
- A student or staff member has tested positive for COVID-19
- School reopening
- Why school is reopening
- Mask requirements

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Contributed by Marcia Latta, communications consultant

**From the Principal:
Child Care Closures**

Dear Parents,

We continue to make adjustments to our school programs to protect the health and safety of students. Due to ongoing public health concerns, child care programs will be closed effective (*date*). No before or after-school care will be available at (*school or program name*).

We understand how important this program is to our families, and we will reopen as soon as it is safe to do so. Your child's well-being is our highest priority.

If you are an essential worker and lack child care, the state (*or our district*) has compiled a list of resources to help essential workers, including options for child care. Please visit the COVID-19 resource website for information (*website*)

We are following official guidelines for tracing exposure to the virus. Please let us know right away if you or a family member in your home has received a positive COVID-19 diagnosis. We will notify the families of children in the childcare program that their child may have been exposed to the virus. Any notification will be strictly confidential.

Thank you for your understanding. This is a challenging time, and we appreciate how important child care services are for your family. We will contact you immediately when we can reopen.

Sincerely,
Principal

**From the Principal:
Student or staff COVID-19 diagnosis**

Dear Parents,

We have recently learned that a student or staff member at (*school*) has tested positive for COVID-19. They are in our thoughts, and we wish them a quick recovery.

We are following state guidelines for reporting these results, and we are working with the health department to ensure compliance with all recommended health and safety rules at our school. Our first priority is to ensure the safety of our students.

Steps we are implementing in cooperation with the local health department include: (*closing school? tracing contacts? sanitizing?*) You can find more information about these rules and procedures on (*district or state health website*). We will continue to update families about the rules at our school and any additional steps that we will follow.

Testing and isolating people who have had a possible virus exposure are very important in helping prevent further spread of the virus.

If your child has any of these symptoms, please contact your medical provider.

- Fever
- Chills
- Cough

(Over)

- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- Loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea, vomiting or diarrhea

You can find more information about COVID-19 symptoms on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website: www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html.

We will maintain the confidentiality of the individuals who test positive. If you have questions about the health-related procedures and response, please contact us.

Thank you for your understanding.

Sincerely,
Principal

**From the Principal:
School Reopening**

Dear Parents,

I hope your family is safe and healthy. We appreciate your understanding and patience during this challenging time, and we empathize with families during this difficult time. I am grateful to our families for adapting to the changes and new demands during this public health crisis.

Based on guidelines from the state health department and the governor, we are planning to open schools for in-person instruction on *(date)*.

Our first priority is the health and safety of our students. We will not open without careful consideration of all factors that impact the well-being of our students.

School will look different this year. Our reopening plan includes *(hybrid? distance? in-person instruction)*. The plan includes *(e.g., extensive and regular sanitation, required masks, isolation recommendations for persons exposed to others with COVID-19)*.

Read the whole reopening plan on the district website: *(URL)*.

We know you have questions. Please follow us on social media and check our school and district websites often for the latest information. I am committed to sharing information as I hear it and will send out additional letters in the near future.

The whole staff at *(school)* is excited to see your child when school opens. This is a difficult time, but we are committed to doing our best to provide an excellent education to your child.

Thank you. I look forward to seeing you soon.

Sincerely,
Principal

(Over)

**From the Principal:
Why we will have an in-person reopening**

Dear Parents,

Our district has decided to reopen schools and bring students back into the classroom for in-person learning. I have heard concerns from parents and would like provide additional information and reassurance about your child's safety.

The decision to resume in-person school is not easy. District leaders considered safety guidelines, current health recommendations in our state and the ongoing damage to students who miss school. The safety of our students is our highest priority. This includes protecting student health and ensuring that all students have access to equitable educational opportunities.

The fact is that in-person school is best for most students, and we will be carefully following the guidance from our state health department. You can read the specifics of the plan on our website (*URL*).

It will be essential that families help children comply with school rules for masks, handwashing and social distancing. I will send reminders of the rules prior to the state of school. If problems arise, we may have to go back to a home-based school model.

I am excited to see students for the new school year. Thank you for your support and understanding. If you have questions, please contact me.

Sincerely,
Principal

**From the Principal:
Reminders about masks**

Dear Parents,

Our district has adopted requirements for masks in all school buildings. This means that students who are (age) and older must wear masks at all times during the school day. This recommendation follows the CDC guidelines for reducing the spread of COVID-19 and keeping others safe.

I know that this is a challenge for many students, and we appreciate your assistance with complying. The bottom line is that we can open school if we all follow the rules and try to keep each other safe. We all want to be able to return to the classroom.

The rules will be simple: masks at all times in common areas and when there are fewer than six feet between students, and no sharing or trading masks.

Younger children could benefit from a lanyard attached to the mask, so it is within easy reach. Help them get used to it by practicing wearing it at home. Parents can also model wearing masks to help students understand how important they are.

We are asking for students to have a basic cloth mask. They are easy to find at local department stores. If you do not have one, we can provide a mask for your child.

(Over)

Thank you for understanding. We can all work together to keep each other safe and get back to normal as soon as possible.

Please contact me if you have any questions.

Letter Templates

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Sincerely,
Principal