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RAMON C. CORTINES
 SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

December 15, 2015

Dear Middle School Principals,

The Los Angeles Unified School District faced a difficult challenge today, and collaboratively we ensured the safety of our learners and leaders. We thank you for your leadership and action.

The Los Angeles School Police Department has completed its walk-through of schools and determined that it is safe for students to return to campus. Maintaining consistency and routine is essential to promoting recovery and healing during times of stress. Therefore, schools will return to a regular school day tomorrow.

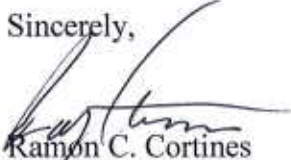
We are issuing the guidance below and attached resources to help your school restore calm. The role of the principal during this time of crisis is crucial and adult self-care is often left until the aftermath. Please be aware of all adult emotions and provide spaces and places for teachers and other adults to discuss the events in a safe and caring environment. As teachers, parents, and students return to school, maintaining a routine for students during these events is the best way to ensure students feel a sense of safety and normalcy.

We recommend that middle schools take the following steps to support student learning:

- Consider utilizing the existing structures (e.g., advisory, Restorative Justice circles, Way of Council) in your schools to provide students, teachers and other school staff with a place to discuss their feelings.
- Determine how your bell schedules for the rest of the week need to be adjusted, especially if final projects/exams need to be accommodated, and consult with your Local District Operations Coordinator for support as needed.
- Communicate with your teachers, school staff, students, parents, Transportation Services Division and Food Services Division to ensure that everyone has a clear understanding of the bell schedules.
- Continue to follow REF-4236.11 for middle and high schools that lists *the last day to submit final marks for Fall semester classes as December 18, 2015*.
 - Recognizing that extenuating circumstances may arise for students and teachers, waiver requests are available to extend the deadline for submitting final marks for Fall semester classes until Monday, December 21. Schools should submit waiver requests to their Local District Counseling Coordinators. This also applies to students that may need to delay final exams as a result of mental health/physical health needs.
- Share the attached guidance from School Mental Health with parents and staff to provide specific strategies for helping student manage stress during difficult times.

We recognize that leading in these times of crisis may take its toll on you as well, so please reach out to your Directors and/or other Local District support staff if you need support or assistance. We thank you for your leadership and continued hard work and dedication to support our students.

Sincerely,


 Ramon C. Cortines
 Superintendent of Schools

Psychological First Aid (PFA)

General Guidelines for Addressing Mental Health Needs in the School Environment
PFA is an evidence-informed approach for assisting children, adolescents, adults, and families in the immediate aftermath of a critical incident, disaster, or terrorism. PFA is designed to reduce the initial distress caused by traumatic events and to foster short and long-term adaptive functioning.



Responding to Crisis Incidents

1 LISTEN to what they say and how they act.

- Address the feeling(s)/behavior(s) as soon as possible.
- If a student wants to talk, be prepared to listen and focus on what s/he says and how you can be of help.
- Observe nonverbal communication. Remember that student(s) may also show their feelings in nonverbal ways, such as increased behavioral problems or increased withdrawal.
- Express compassion and calmness in your statements as well as nonverbal behaviors.

2 PROTECT by maintaining structure, stability, and consistency.

- Maintain daily routines, activities, and structure with clear expectations and consistent rules.
- Provide supervision and consistency to encourage successful outcomes.
- Monitor conversations that students may engage in or hear.
- Give information that is accurate and age-appropriate.
- Keep the environment free of anything that could re-traumatize the student.
- Validate the student's life experience.
- Maintain confidentiality as appropriate.

3 CONNECT through interaction, activities and resources.

- "Check in" with student(s) on a regular basis.
- Become familiar with learning support staff at your school (e.g. Psychiatric Social Worker, PSA Counselor, School Psychologist,



Counselor, Nurse) and community health/mental health services. Make referrals to the appropriate resources who may offer support to student(s).

- Encourage interactions, activities, and team projects with friends and teachers.
- Keep communication open with others involved in the student(s) lives (e.g. parents, other teachers, coaches, etc.).
- *Note: Consult with DCFS if you suspect child abuse and/or neglect.*

4 MODEL calm and optimistic behavior.

- Model healthy responses by remaining calm, courteous, organized, and helpful.
- Pay attention to your thoughts, feelings and reactions about the event. In the midst of a crisis, students are often watching for verbal and nonverbal cues by the adults they are with, which may influence how students cope and behave.
- Take constructive actions to assure safety.
- Acknowledge the difficulty of the situation, but demonstrate how people can come together to cope after such an event.
- Practice self-care.

5 TEACH about normal changes that can occur when traumatized.

- Students may have different reactions even to the same event.
- Encourage students to identify and use positive coping strategies to help them after the event.
- Help your students to problem solve to get through each day successfully.
- Help students set small "doable" goals and share in these achievements as "wins."
- *Note: With time and support, students generally do better. If they do not, they should be encouraged and taught to seek assistance from a parent/guardian or a school staff member.*

Primeros Auxilios Psicológicos (PFA)

Directrices Generales para atender las Necesidades de Salud Mental dentro del Entorno Escolar
PFA es un enfoque en la evidencia informada para ayudar a los niños, adolescentes, adultos, y familias durante el período justamente después de un incidente crítico, desastre, o acto terrorista. PFA está diseñado para reducir el estrés inicial causado por eventos traumáticos y promover la adaptación a corto y largo plazo.



Respondiendo a Incidentes de Crisis

1 ESCUCHE lo que dicen y cómo actúan.

- Dirija atención a las sensaciones/comportamientos presentes tan pronto como posible.
- Si un estudiante quiere hablar, este preparado para escuchar y centrarse en lo que él/ella dice y cómo le puede ayudar.
- Observen la comunicación no verbal. Recuerden que el estudiante (s) también puede mostrar sus sentimientos en formas no verbales, como el aumento de problemas de conducta o mayor retraimiento.
- Exprese compasión y la calma en sus declaraciones, así como sus comportamientos no verbales.

2 PROTEJA por mantener la estructura, estabilidad y consistencia.

- Mantenga las rutinas diarias, actividades y estructura con expectativas claras y reglas consistentes.
- Proporcione supervisión y consistencia para alentar resultados exitosos.
- Monitoree las conversaciones que los estudiantes pueden participar en o escuchar.
- De información precisa y apropiada para la edad del estudiante.
- Mantenga el ambiente libre de cualquier cosa que pudiera volver a traumatizar al estudiante.
- Valide la experiencia de vida del estudiante.
- Mantenga la confidencialidad, apropiadamente.

3 CONÉCTE al estudiante a través de la interacción, actividades y recursos.

- Mantenga contacto con estudiante(s) en un base regular.
- Familiarícese con el aprendizaje personal de apoyo en su escuela (por ejemplo, Trabajador Social Psiquiátrico, Consejero de Asistencia, Psicólogo Escolar, Consejero, Enfermera) y servicios de comunitarios de



salud / salud mental. Haga referencias a los recursos adecuados que pueden ofrecer apoyo al estudiante(s).

- Fomente las interacciones, actividades y proyectos de equipo con amigos y maestros.
- Mantenga una comunicación abierta con los demás implicados en la vida del estudiante(s) (por ejemplo, los padres, otros maestros, entrenadores).
- *Nota: Consulte con el Departamento de Servicios para Niños y Familias (DCFS) si sospecha abuso infantil y/o negligencia.*

4 MODELE calma y comportamiento optimista.

- Modele respuestas saludables con mantener la calma, ser cortés, organizado, y servicial.
- Preste atención a sus pensamientos, sentimientos y reacciones sobre el evento. En medio de una crisis, estudiantes a menudo están viendo por señales verbales y no verbales de los adultos que están con ellos, lo que puede influir la manera en que los estudiantes se comportan y enfrentan la situación.
- Tome acciones constructivas para garantizar la seguridad.
- Reconozca la dificultad de la situación, pero demuestre cómo las personas pueden unirse para enfrentarse a un evento como tal.
- Practique formas de cuidarse a sí mismo.

5 ENSEÑE los cambios normales que pueden ocurrir cuando sufren algún trauma.

- Los estudiantes pueden tener diferentes reacciones, incluso para el mismo evento.
- Anime a los estudiantes a identificar y utilizar estrategias positivas de afrontamiento para ayudarles después del evento.
- Ayude a los estudiantes a resolver problemas para enfrentarse a cada día con éxito.
- Ayude a los estudiantes a establecer pequeñas metas "posibles" y compartan en estos logros como "victorias".
- *Nota: Con el tiempo y el apoyo, los estudiantes suelen hacer mejor. Si no lo hacen, se les debe animar y enseñar a pedir ayuda a uno de sus padres/guardianes o a un personal de la escuela.*

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD

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RAMON C. CORTINES
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

December 16, 2015

Dear Parents and Guardians,

There is nothing more important to us than the safety of your children...our students.

As a result of a threat made against our schools, the Board of Education and I directed all schools to close on Tuesday, December 15. This decision was not made lightly. We know that the situation disrupted the lives of millions across Los Angeles and beyond. When it comes to the well-being of your children, we will *never* take chances.

Thanks to the extraordinary effort by Los Angeles School Police and our law-enforcement partners, all L.A. Unified schools and charters have been inspected. Chief Steven Zipperman has given the all-clear for students to return to campus. Classes and after-school activities resume December 16.

We know that many of you have questions about how to support your students as it relates to this situation. The attached handout provides specific strategies you can use to help children manage stress during difficult times. For additional information about what occurred, visit www.lausd.net or call the LAUSD Information Hotline at (213) 241-2064.

We could not be more grateful for your understanding, trust, and support.

Sincerely,

Ramon C. Cortines
Superintendent of Schools

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RAMON C. CORTINES
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

December 15, 2015

Dear Teachers,

As classroom teachers you have the eyes and ear of the students. The district shut-down of December 15, 2015 was unprecedented. In response to a threat received, all schools were closed over concerns for student and employee safety. As we return to normalcy there may be lingering questions and concerns about next steps.

When threats and violence occur, the situations are inevitably complex – with varying perspectives and ideas for resolution. Teaching is an art of planting and cultivating ideas. No single lesson can transform a student, but it can inspire one.

Every adult plays an important role for students in schools. It is imperative that adults remain calm and optimistic, and to be cautious against having adult conversations in the presence of children. One of the most effective ways to provide social-emotional support to all students is by implementing the five key components of Psychological First Aid: Listen, Protect, Connect, Model and Teach.

- **Listen** to what students say and how they act.
- **Protect** by maintaining structure, stability, and consistency.
- **Connect** through interaction, activities and resources.
- **Model** calm and optimistic behavior.
- **Teach** about normal changes that can occur when traumatized.

Students may want to dialogue about recent local and international events. The closing of schools may trigger increased anxiety about terrorist attacks, such as those that occurred in Paris and San Bernardino, as well as the violence in their own communities.

As a classroom teacher, you can promote the process of recovery by facilitating a dialogue. The following are guidelines for facilitating classroom dialogues. To engage your students in conversation, proceed with the following steps:

- Read the script below to your students:
As a result of a safety threat made against Los Angeles Unified Schools and in an abundance of caution, Superintendent Ramon C. Cortines directed that all schools be closed yesterday to ensure the safety of all students and school-site employees.

District officials worked closely with law enforcement on all matters related to the threat. To secure all school sites, campus administrators and law enforcement walked through every school, checking for anything suspicious. It was determined that all LAUSD schools are safe and we are pleased to be able to resume classes as normal.

- Prior to initiating dialogues with students, it will be important to establish norms with the students. The following are suggested norms for student dialogues. Please adapt for the developmental ages of your students.

Student Norms for Dialogue

1. I understand that we have come together in good faith to explore how to support a positive school culture.
2. I will be open and actively listen to gain understanding of my peers.
3. I am willing to learn from others and to challenge my own assumptions.

4. I recognize that there is always three sides to every story -- his, hers, and the truth.
5. I should not judge someone until I have walked in their shoes.
6. I will speak respectfully.
7. All voices are important. That means I may need to step up or step back so everyone can be heard.
8. I will assume positive intentions and not take things personally.
9. I will model positive and respectful behaviors. I will treat others the way *they* want to be treated.
10. I believe that we can agree to disagree. I can disagree respectfully by separating the idea from the person (e.g. "I disagree with what was said. It is my perception, that _____.")
11. I will maintain confidentiality. What's said here, stays here.
12. I believe that together we can do the impossible.

Now let's take some time to discuss what we know and what your thoughts and feelings are about recent events.

- The following questions may be used to initiate student dialogues. Read, post or distribute the following questions. Have students indicate their responses on paper. Younger students may wish to draw their responses. Collect the students' papers. If a student writes a response that raises concern, please share that information with your school site administrator as soon as practical.
- Once students have written their responses, facilitate classroom discussion in response to a series of prompts. Be aware of avoiding graphic details or dramatizing the event. Do not politicize the event or promote bias. It is important that you remain neutral in your opinions.

Questions for Dialogue

1. *What makes you feel safe in school?*
 2. *What concerns do you have related to your school community?*
 3. *What are some possible solutions that could resolve these concerns?*
 4. *What can YOU do to promote peace? Or What are some ways you can help yourself when you are upset, sad, or scared?*
- Students may want to discuss what they saw on television or in social media. It is important to reiterate the verified facts as stated in the script and to remain focused on students' feelings and social emotional needs.
 - Continue to validate students' concerns. Utilize the strategies provided in the attached Psychological First Aid Handout. Refer any students that might be having difficulty to your designated school site crisis team member.

For lesson plans and educational resources, visit:

- [Division of Instruction](#)
- [Human Relations, Diversity and Equity](#)
- [Crisis Counseling & Intervention Services](#)

Your support and cooperation are crucial to the vision of peaceful school community.

We appreciate the leadership you provide to your students.

Sincerely,


Ramon C. Cortines
Superintendent of Schools

Attachments