# Leading a School Community Through Crisis

An Administrative Perspective

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# Introductions and Warm Up

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WARM UP: With the marker provided, write words or short phrases that come to mind when you hear the word "CRISIS"

- write them BIG
- only one word per post-it note

# Our Experience Leading Through Crisis:

Students:

- Drowning
- Car accidents as pedestrian, passenger and driver
- Medical complications
- Terminal illness
- Suicide on and off campus
- Overdose
- Murder off campus
- Domestic violence

Adults:

- Death-Medical condition from work
- Terminal illness
- Loss of child
- Employee spouse suicide
- Death of student parents
- Death of faculty parents

# Agenda:

9:00-10:00 Rethinking Crisis
10:00 to 10:15 Questions and Answers
10:15 to 10:45 Tabletop exercise
10:45 to 11:00 Discussion and closing

## What is a "Crisis"

A <u>critical event</u> or process that creates or has the potential to create large-scale <u>social/emotional instability</u> in the school and/or district.

❏ Death (accidental, suicide, homicide)
❏ Serious injury
❏ Self-injurious behav.
❏ Community violence
❏ Serious threat
❏ Sickness / Terminal illness
❏ Aftermath of any tragic event

## Warm Up - Sort

As a table, sort your sticky notes into three categories.

<u>Negative Words:</u>    "Grief"

<u>Neutral Words:</u>    "Communication"

<u>Positive Words:</u>    "Love"

# Let's see if we can shift your thinking:



# Question of the Day:



*How can we shift our thinking about crisis response so it is more "leaderlike?"*

# The Evolution of our Thinking:

**Reactive** Crisis Management:

- Crisis happens and crisis events cascade.
- Administrative decisions are forced by events and developments
- Triage Mentality
- Short term thinking
- Managing crisis in small chunks

# The Evolution of our Thinking:

**Proactive** Crisis Management:

- Crisis team more rehearsed/experienced
- Anticipate events and act
- Delegation of resources in anticipation of events unfolding
- Monitor social media before a complaint comes in - Put someone out to greet the press before they come on campus.

# MANAGEMENT DURING CRISIS

| Preparation | Response | Recovery | Post-Crisis |
|---|---|---|---|
| •Have a written plan<br>•Have a crisis team with a clear chain of command and communication protocol<br>•Have a phone tree, text message group, etc. ready.<br>•Practice and do table-top drills<br>•Use crisis prevention strategies<br>• Risk assessment protocols<br>• Bully response / prevention<br>• LGBT support<br>• etc..<br>• Use education to prevent crisis<br>• Suicide prevention<br>• Drivers ed.<br>• DARE, SADD, etc.<br>• PBIS strategies<br>•Maintain an ongoing list of fragile staff (and students) | •Gather information throughout the event<br>•Take on partners - RCT on call<br>•Anticipate issues including press, social media, etc.<br>•Communicate the big and little things<br>•Look for community connections to loss<br>• Designate a point person for family contact<br>•Don't forget the systems - student management system<br>•Take care of your team's basic needs<br>•Remove family from auto-communication system<br>•Notify transportation and registration<br>•Script response to parent and student inquiries<br>•Clearly document messages and phone numbers for return calls - say number back<br>•Check "Family tree" and close relationships (coaches, advisors, etc.)<br>•Check district calendar for events. | • Attend to long term mental health needs of community<br>• Manage donations and scholarships.<br>• Guidelines for memorials.<br>• Long term reminders and anniversaries<br>•Manage memorials and spaces for them.<br>•Set schedule of coverage for memorials, wakes, services,<br>•Notify next grade level or school.<br>•Put event on calendar as a recurring reminder.<br>•Clean student locker - save mementos.<br>•Discuss events with parents - yearbook, graduation ceremony, etc.<br>•Activate RCT as necessary | •Debrief and learn from response to crisis.<br>•Make revisions to crisis plan<br>•Save and organize resources for next time<br>•Use event to educate community |

# The Evolution of our Thinking:

**Leading** Through Crisis:

- Thinking holistically about crisis events
- Building community through crisis
- Reinforcing a common value system (PBIS)
- Teaching and modeling how to deal with loss, manage grief, memorialize those lost, attend a wake, etc.
- Reinforcing important relationships with school community partners

# LEADERSHIP DURING CRISIS

| Preparation | Response | Recovery | Post-Crisis |
|---|---|---|---|
| Leaders Ask:<br><br>•How can I build bridges with community leaders before I need them?<br>•How can we ensure that all members of a school community have strong personal bonds to others before they need them?<br>•How can I share what I know and have learned with other leaders?  How can I learn from them?<br>• How does our communities value system align with our planned response?<br>•How can our core value system reduce future crises? | Leaders Ask:<br>• How can I communicate with all constituents to build trust and build teamwork?<br>•How can I take care of the mental health of the "helpers?"<br>•How can we model and teach the beginning stages of the grieving process?<br>• How can we respond in a way that inspires trust?<br>•Am I balancing my display of strength and vulnerability as a leader? | Leaders Ask:<br>•How can we bring the community together to memorialize and remember?<br>• How can we reinforce and build partnerships forged through this crisis?<br>•How can we model and teach the latter stages of the grieving process?<br>•Can we use this event as a point of strength and unity? | Leaders Ask:<br>•How can we debrief so all are willing and able to give feedback?<br>•How can I the support the mental health of our crisis team?<br>•How can we create a learning community so all can learn from going through crisis?<br>•How can we inspire others to be "helpers" in our school community?<br>•Are we nurturing our next generation of school mental health professionals? |

# Game - Go Fishing:

Sort the descriptors provided into three categories:

1. REACTIVE:
2. PROACTIVE:
3. LEADING:

# The Evolution of our Thinking:

### Reactive

**What it feels like:**

- Anxiety is high
- Can't catch up.
- Centralized decision making
- Feeling battered by information that keeps coming in
- Surprised by developments
- Confusion about who is doing what
- Response is fragmented
- Outside pressures dictate or strongly influence response

### Proactive
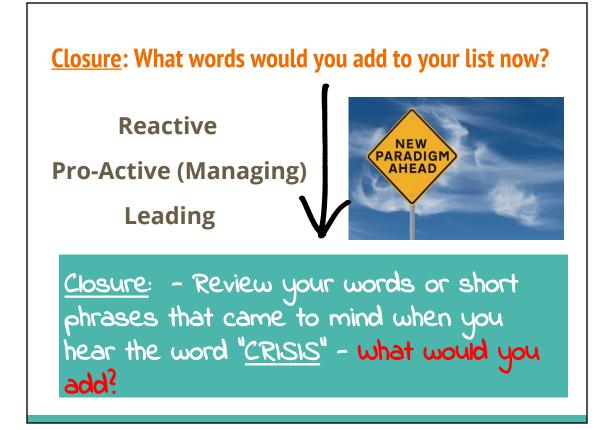
**What it feels like:**

- Anxiety is medium
- Others take direction from leader
- Developments are anticipated
- Clear, top-down communication
- Centralized hierarchy
- Response is measured
- Required constant communication
- Leaders react with confidence
- Outside pressures complicate and influence response

### Leading

**What it feels like:**

- Anxiety is lower
- Clearly defined roles - people know what to do
- Templates and other responses ready when needed
- Others anticipate developments and take initiative to act
- Leadership is distributed - others are empowered to act as leaders
- Response is Holistic
- Team is stable and methodical despite outside pressures

# Fishing Activity Key:

| Reactive | Proactive | Leading |
|----------|-----------|---------|
| 1 | 5 | 2 |
| 3 | 6 | 7 |
| 4 | 9 | 12 |
| 8 | 11 | 13 |
| 10 | 14 | 19 |
| 16 | 15 | 22 |
| 18 | 17 | 23 |
| 21 | 20 | |
| | 24 | |

## Closure: What words would you add to your list now?

**Reactive**

**Pro-Active (Managing)**

**Leading**



Closure: - Review your words or short phrases that came to mind when you hear the word "CRISIS" - what would you add?

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## Closing Thoughts - What is Crisis?

### Danger

Scary
Stressful
Heart Wrenching
Sad
Anxiety
Depressed

### Opportunity

A time to bond
A time to build community
A time to solidify relationships
A time to build bridges
Reinforce community values
A time to model for children
A time to show that we are
   human too
A time to teach lots of things

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