

COVID-19 THIS IS NOT A DRILL!

Lessons Learned in a Crisis & Plans Going Forward

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Just a few weeks into managing the COVID-19 crisis, the Ravenscroft team took a moment to reflect on 10 lessons we've learned already and look ahead to our next steps.

1. Plan. We had a Ravenscroft School Pandemic Plan originally drafted in 2007 and revised in 2013. This was a pre-crisis step and part of our risk management work. Of course, it requires the ability to imagine how things could go wrong. As this crisis was unfolding, our associate head of business & finance remembered the document, which provided a general framework. This was foundational to our ability to chart a clear course. We realized right then and there, this was not a drill. [Ravenscroft School Pandemic Plan](#)

2. Establish a core team and have it adapt and evolve as needed. You don't want a crisis to consume the attention and energy of the entire organization. Per our Pandemic Plan, we created the first level "Command Team." As the crisis has evolved, roles have shifted as we have adapted and so have the folks in the weekly conversation. [Ravenscroft Pandemic Plan Questions 2020](#)

3. Stabilize the situation. We had the good fortune of not being on a spring break yet when the crisis took hold, so we were able to prepare. We had some time to organize our Command Team and began meeting weekly. Initially we focused on questions underscored by the belief we would have more time. (See above.) Then, as we observed what South Korea and Seattle were reporting, we realized we needed to adapt. We made the determination to call a "snow day" and plan a full professional day of training. This was not a stressful day for us at the time as we still held out hope that maybe we would not need to put the training into action. We had faculty and students bringing their belongings home each day in preparation. A few days later, the head of school connected with other area leaders who had shared belief we needed to make a decision and not wait for the public schools to make the decision for us. We went out early and announced we would be going to a virtual teaching and learning platform. We were ready and worked to shift away from a snow day mindset and reset some institutional norms.

4. Communication. Getting the cadence of communication is critical in a crisis. [Ravenscroft Coronavirus Resource](#). Our director of marketing & communications and team set up a dedicated page on our

website to place any updates, resources, and communications. This was vital and helped in keeping emails and phone calls to a reasonable level. It was also important to decide how frequently we would communicate.

5. Consult and coordinate. Bring in help, in terms of both resources and perspectives. Make sure that those who need to know are consulted. We reached inside and out and made ourselves aware of all research and information. Our associate head of academic & student life, chief information office, and head of school set the first schedule. Within 24 hours, our director of educational technology had created the [Ravenscroft Teaching & Learning Site](#), adapted from colleagues in Seattle. In addition, we also took our learning public and encouraged others to use what we were doing if it was helpful.

6. Stay connected to your board chair and full board. Pronto. The bad news will not improve with age. You don't lead a community through a crisis alone. Stress reveals all sorts of behaviors and it's important for leaders to be in lock step with their boards. I never send a communication out that the chair doesn't see first, then the full board, faculty & staff, and then parents and students. I provide the chair with daily touches and touch base with the full board weekly. Our executive team and (associate head of philanthropy, associate head of business & finance, associate head of academics & student life, chief information officer, director of communication & marketing, assistant head for human resources & diversity & inclusion, executive assistant for head of school & associate head for academics & student life) are on all the calls, creating a great team.

7. Control your worries. You want to react, but not overreact. Don't let your imagination carry you into unrealistic fears. In crisis, folks look to the leadership to offer them hope. This is where the strength of the team comes into play. Our team is built on a high level of trust. Folks regularly check in with each other. We believe we will get to the other side of this crisis.

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/vrRvQEwR7RanJoP18>

8. Don't act in haste. "Haste" is relative to the severity and potential severity of any threat. To the greatest degree possible, we didn't want the speed of our response to detract from its effectiveness. Again, we had the good fortune of being in session (and not yet on spring break), so it was good to pace our preparation. We chose the simplest path to our objective as a Google platform school. We chose to initially keep the same schedule for the first two weeks. We stay the course of being decisive, and we learn, adapt, and communicate.

9. Pay attention to fatigue. We have been very mindful of individual and collective fatigue and health and wellness. One of the pieces of information we had heard from South Korea was that getting virtual academics up and running did not take too long and folks began to acclimate pretty quickly. Learning how to combat social isolation was a different story. We have a very strong counseling department that is prepared as well. Advisory was a must to continue. Our Physical Education Department and Strength & Conditioning also set up workout for student athletes who had seasons suspended and have also shared apps and workouts for faculty and staff. [weekly workout for week 1](#)

10. Pay attention to your core values. Stress may lead you astray. Keep your values in mind and beware of any short-term wins that may cause long-term anguish. We have reminded our whole community to breathe using the Navy Seal technique of the “5-2-7” (Breath in count of 5, hold for 2, exhale count of 7). As soon as one step was set in motion, we were already thinking of the next. We are committed to decisive decision making, adapting, learning, and communicating clearly and then repeating the steps above. As head of school, I also maintain contact through social media and emailed videos.

Going forward as of 3/22/20.

Goals: Be Decisive, Learn, Adapt, Communicate

Follow Steps Above; Keep taking our learning public.

- Evaluate Schedule & Communicate with Full Leadership Team and Academic Committee
 - Based on one week in of learning, we are re-evaluating the schedule and rest of the master calendar. It has become clear to us that we’ll likely be off our physical campus for the full 4th quarter.
 - [UPDATE 3/23/20 New Schedule March-May Revised Calendar 2020](#)
 - [New Schedules being finalized; Communication to Board 3/24/20; Community 3/25/20 am](#)
- Assess Financial Impact - Board Finance Committee Meeting 3/27/20
 - Enrollment is holding steady for now.
 - Families expressing great appreciation.
 - We are refunding bus service and extended day.

- No requests for tuition refund yet.
- Impact on auxiliary revenue and possible summer program
- Virtual Finance Committee meeting this week. (Keep the board close.)
- Decide by May 15 if we reset the projected budget.
- Interviewing candidates virtually is proceeding. Offers for hire on hold for now.
- Communicate Changes This Week
 - Check days/accreditation [Ok with SAIS 165 days](#)
 - Repositioning our Spring Days and going to four-day weeks until May 21st (last day of school).
- Examine Important End-of-Year Traditions & What Can Go Virtual
 - Prom to be postponed for now. (Happy to host on campus in the summer if possible.)
 - Team has developed two draft Commencement Plans. (Speakers asked to record their remarks on video.)
 - Plan 1: If small groups are allowed to gather for diplomas
 - Plan 2 : Full Virtual Commencement. Diplomas and yellow roses delivered to each senior.
 - HOS to communicate via video to students directly about those changes