

FACT SHEET
Threat Investigation and Lockdown Protocol
In Response to December 22, 2017 Incident at RHS

1. Was the student who notified you of the threat one of the eight who had been threatened?

No, another student reported it. The upstanding student immediately reported to the proper staff what was known.

2. Was that threat made in writing, and if so, via social media or a physical note?

The message was shared via a group chat between two students - the one making the threat and the upstander that reported it.

3. What time were you notified of the threat?

The conversation between the upstander and the student making the threat occurred between 8:22 am and 8:35 am. The upstanding student came to the office after first hour...about 8:45 am and divulged their concerns about a threat.

4. What happened after you were aware of the threat?

During the interview with the upstander, it was determined that no students were in danger at that time. The high school principal went and removed the student making the threat from class while the assistant principal contacted the City of Ripon Police Department and the School Resource Officer (SRO).

5. Was this determination made based on the interview with the student and if so, what did the student say to suggest the threat was empty?

The high school administration convened the Violent Risk Assessment team and followed the steps in the RASD Violent Risk Assessment Procedures document, asking a specific series of questions to complete a thorough investigation. The team used the specific language from the Violent Risk Assessment Procedure document when reporting out their findings. In this case, the team, which included the SRO, principal, assistant principal, and school counselor, interviewed the student and then parent to determine if the threat was credible and if the student had the means to carry it out. The purpose of the Violent Risk Assessment Procedures document is to evaluate the threat and the circumstances surrounding it in order to uncover any evidence that indicates the threat is likely to be carried out. This public document is available on our website.

6. How did the investigation proceed once the student making the threat was secured?

An investigation with the student, the SRO, principal, assistant principal, and school counselor began. The student's parent was contacted and came to school. The student's parent was very involved. The team talked with the student's parent and the student and then had a lengthy conversation with just the student's parent which finished after both lunch periods were completed, about 1:00 pm. The Violent Risk Assessment team spent close to 4 hours with the student that made the threat and the student's parent during the investigation and utilized a series of questions from the RASD Violent Risk Assessment Protocol document. At the conclusion of the investigation, the student was removed from school grounds and, according to RASD policy, is subject to discipline up to and including expulsion.

7. Was the student who made the threat allowed back in the classroom at any time during the day?

No. The student was retained in the office with administration and law enforcement, and then left with their parent and has not returned to school and will not return to school pending their referral to the board for recommended expulsion.

8. What was the timing of communicating the incident to parents? students? staff? the public?

It took close to four hours of questioning with the student making the threat and that student's parent. Once the investigation was completed, the students named in the threat were called to the office as a group where they were told of the situation. The team spent two hours contacting the students and the parents of students who were named in the threat. Those conversations started after lunch at about 1:00 p.m. and finished at 3:00 p.m. A message was then sent out to through Infinite Campus (IC) Messenger to high school parents noting the parents of the eight students targeted were contacted so other parents knew their child was not one of the eight students. Staff were notified through district email.

9. Why weren't RMS parents notified since their children share the building with the high school students?

In retrospect, we should have sent out the message to RMS parents as well. That will be a change in our procedure moving forward.

10. Some parents said they weren't notified. Were attempts made to contact all parents or just the primary parent/guardian contact on file?

Initially, primary contacts or who we were able to make contact with based on the conversation with the child, were made to families of the eight students. An IC Message was sent to all RHS parents on December 22 and then an additional district-wide parent message was sent out on December 26. We are working on sending out a mailing to all parents in the district to identify those that didn't receive the messages and reaffirm their Infinite Campus settings.

11. In an incident such as this, when do you notify police?

Ripon is fortunate to have a SRO Michels right in the building so often times she is actually hearing or receiving information right at the same time as administration.

12. How does the safety risk to students factor into your reaction plans?

That is job No. 1. The Violent Risk Assessment document reflects best practices for responding to threats. The District's Safety Team members meet at least monthly to review procedures such as this and make recommendations for updates.

13. How do you measure the preliminary credulity of the threat? (i.e. how do you quickly determine the intent of the student allegedly making the threat?)

In this case, the messages shared by the upstanding student who reported the threat included the names of the student making the threat and the eight students being targeted so we could take some immediate action. This is harder to do if a note with a list of names is found on the floor in the hallway as we wouldn't know who wrote it and if it is from today or four months ago. We were very fortunate we knew the time the message was sent — it had happened just minutes before — that helped us expedite the process.

14. What considerations come into play to help you determine whether to implement a lockdown, evacuation or to handle it quietly quickly as you did through a Violent Risk Assessment Team?

Ripon utilizes two types of lockdowns: a soft lockdown and a hard lockdown. The soft lockdown is most often used in situations involving an outside threat or a threat in the surrounding area. At that point, staff are locking the building and not allowing anyone in or out to secure the population that is in the school. Often times instruction continues as it normally would. Sometimes a soft lockdown is used in a medical emergency to keep hallways clear because EMTs are responding to the needs of an individual. A hard lockdown is used for an active threat only if an evacuation isn't an option. If an active threat occurs in one part of the building, a looping message is sent out over the intercom announcing there is a threat within the building and staff are able to make a decision in terms of how best to keep students in their areas safe. Since the incidents at Columbine and Sandy Hook a run, fight, hide response is used rather than simply locking students and staff in rooms.

14. What protocol do you follow to assess the course of action to take regarding the student making the threat and those he has targeted?

It's a Violent Risk Assessment document. The high school administrators said they had that document in their hand while they were dealing with this. That's truly the directive from the School Board; that's what administrators are supposed to do - assess and then respond to the threat. In this case, the team immediately retained the student who had made the threat and secured the student in the office with the principal and law enforcement. This moved the threat away from other students and staff. What followed were student and locker searches.