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LEVERAGING Social Media in Emergencies

Suggestions for discussing the Sparkol animation with staff as part of the March 20, 2015 Emergency Response drill

Before showing the Sparkol animation:

- Ask staff to draw a line down the center of a piece of paper, then label each column “Good” and “Not-so-Good.” Then,
- Have staff find a partner or two for a “turn and talk”
- During the turn and talk, staff are to brainstorm what they’ve noticed about social media and texting during emergency situations – and to put those “noticings” into either the “Good” or “Not so good” columns. *(What they have noticed might be a school emergency, but it does not have to be. If they need suggestions, have them think back to what they remember about social media use during the Marysville Pilchuck High School shooting or during the Oso slide.)*
- After the turn and talk, call on some of the staff to relate what they noted in the columns.
- Be sure to have someone point out what they saw as “good.”

Introduce the Sparkol animation:

- As many of you noted, social media and texting are not all bad – in any situation, including an emergency.
- Today, we are going to look at social media and texting differently than we usually do in schools – as potentially “good” tools to reduce fear, give accurate information and quell rumors.
- We have learned from our law enforcement and 911 partners that phone calls – land line and cell – are the first to “go dark” in an emergency. Social media communication remains after cell phone services are clogged, and text messages are the most likely communications to “make it through” for the longest period of time.
- We know students have cell phones – and that many parents have provided them to use “during emergencies.” We are going to talk today about our using those tools – and guiding students – to use those tools in effective ways during emergencies. We have cell phones; the kids have cell phones – there is no preventing their use during emergencies. Let’s learn how to LEVERAGE their use.

After the Sparkol animation:

- Encourage staff to “turn and talk” again – thinking about the intruder scenario they just experienced. In the role they played in that scenario, how might they have used and encouraged students to use cell phones to LEVERAGE information about the situation.
- How might the district use cell phones to do the same.
- Have someone capture those ideas so we can compile them for future use.

What students say about social media and texting during emergencies:

- Kim Brenner asked some secondary students about what they would do with cell phones in an emergency. Their response is on the flip side.

- Secondary students said they would use their cell phones to **text** family members to let them know their whereabouts and that they were ok.
- Most said they would **not call** as 1) they never make phone calls with their phones and 2) if they were in a situation where they were hiding, they would not want to make the noise.
- Most said they would **not call 911** as they thought the school already would have done that.
- When asked about social media **none thought they would use social media** as they thought it would be the **least of their concerns** if in an actual emergency. When I suggested that they use social media as a way to communicate their safety and whereabouts some said maybe, but most still said that would not have occurred to them.

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