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BURLINGTON SCHOOL DISTRICT PROCEDURE

PROCEDURE CODE F3P: REUNIFICATION PROCEDURE

Summary 1
Reunification Procedures 1
Prior to the Event 1
The Day of the Event 2
Accountability: The One non-negotiable 2
Communication 2
Roles and Duties 3
School-Based Mental Health Professionals 3
Teachers: Stay with your students 3
Transportation roles and duties 3
Preparation 4
Moving from Lockdown to Reunification 4
Clerical Information 4
Appendix A: Reunification Roles and Duties 5
Appendix B: Staging the Reunification Site (Visuals) 7
Appendix C: Reunification Card Instructions 9
Appendix D: Reunification Card - Reunification Card - EN 10

Summary

Circumstances may occur that require families to pick up their students in a formalized, controlled release. The process of controlled release is called a reunification and may be necessary due to weather, a power outage, a hazmat event, danger outside the school, or if a crisis occurs at the school. This reunification procedure makes this process more organized, predictable, and less chaotic for all involved.

Reunification Procedures

Reunification is the process of safely reconnecting students with their families following an unexpected event that makes a school unsafe. Depending on the situation, reunification may involve a partial student population or the entire school. During a regular school day, reunification is what most think of as dismissal procedures. However, various unforeseen events may require dismissal, sheltering in place, or relocation to an evacuation site. Common triggers include power outages, heating failures, severe weather, gas leaks, or security threats. Schools typically manage reunification independently during smaller incidents, while larger or more complex events may require District support. All offsite reunification requires District resources.

Prior to the Event

- Establish relocation sites. (See the Emergency Response Manual for the assigned building's relocation site.)
- Using a map of the site, establish:
  - Location within building where students and staff will be gathering/waiting.
  - Location outside of building where families will arrive and check in.

    - Location outside or inside the building where families will be brought to reunite with their student (this must be a different room than where the school's staff and students are gathered).
        - Controlled lines of sight should allow for an orderly flow, so issues can be handled with less drama and anxiety.
        - Pedestrian "flows" must be created so lines don't cross.
    - Location inside the building where families will go if their student is NOT at the reunification site or is missing. (School Counselor/Mental Health Professional should be assigned to this area.)
- Assign staff to specific roles in reunification.
- Practice reunification with staff in their assigned roles without students present.
- Ensure reunification cards are printed and in the office go-bag. (See Appendix C.)
- Have paper backup emergency contact lists and daily attendance available.
    - *It is common for wi-fi and cellular networks to become congested and fail from the volume of traffic, and the school may not be available if there is an active threat or investigation.*

The Day of the Event

- Enact Evacuation and Situational Awareness procedures.
    - Locking doors.
    - If class 'runs' or relocates, bring office and nurse go-bags and classroom red/green emergency guides.
- Set up incident command area.
- Ensure that all necessary roles in this process are filled by a staff member, taking into account those who might be absent from pre-assigned roles. (See Appendix A for a full list of roles and responsibilities.)
- Deliver the students to an assembly area or a transportation area beyond the field of vision of families.
- Take attendance of who is at the assembly area (students and staff). Make sure it is accurate and is updated in real time throughout the event.
    - Determine the names of those transported to hospitals and any fatalities.
        - Safety Officer works with Emergency Medical Services (EMS) and law enforcement and serves as the communication person to let School-based Mental Health Professionals know of this information as soon as possible, so family notifications are made in a timely manner.
    - If evacuation has to occur before daily attendance has been taken, usher students to the nearest relocation site and take accurate attendance at all relocation sites.
- Once students are on-site, notify families of the location.
- Set up and operate "Family Check-in Location."
    - "Greeters" hand families a Reunification Card and help them understand the process.
    - The families complete the card and bring it to the check-in area.
    - The procedure allows families to self-sort during check-in (those with ID in one line and those without ID in another line), streamlining the process.
    - "Checker" verifies families' identification at the check-in area.
    - At the check-in area, the reunification card is split at the perforation, and families receive the bottom portion. The top portion goes to the "Runner," who will retrieve the student from the waiting area.
        - Once the student is reunified with their adult, the "Runner" gives the bottom of the card to the "Exit Accountant."

Remember: Successful reunification is about managing the student and parent experience.

Accountability: The One non-negotiable

The one thing that cannot be modified is the need for 100% accountability of students and staff. It's imperative that school administration knows who is at the reunification site and who is not. Understand that the exact location of everyone may not be known at the moment (this is especially true in a violent event where many will self-evacuate), however, identifying who is at the impacted site, who evacuated via transportation, and who arrived at the reunification site will aid the team in determining who is present at the reunification site and who is missing.

Communication

Communication with parents and guardians is critical to the reunification process. Once students and staff are at the reunification site and you are ready to begin the reunification process, a message is sent to families regarding where

reunification will take place and what they need to bring with them. Throughout the year, routinely ask parents to update their contact information, and ask them to appoint a trusted friend or neighbor as a backup contact. That is especially important when parents might have a job that restricts their ability to leave, be available by phone, or requires a long commute.

Roles and Duties

Priorities:

- Student and staff safety and well-being.
- Student and staff whereabouts and condition.
- Starting the recovery process.

Objectives:

- Every student has been accounted for.
- Every staff member has been accounted for.
- Every student still in the school's control is reunited safely with their safe adult.

School-Based Mental Health Professionals

An evacuation and reunification can cause stress or anxiety regardless of the reason it was conducted. Therefore, it is important that our mental health professionals are on-site and ready to assist. Additionally, mental health professionals need to be made available for families who are waiting in line. They work with the Safety Officer. They should be stationed at the check-in area to assist families who are notified that their student is not at the reunification site.

Teachers: Stay with your Students

Often teachers will group together in the immediate aftermath, or assume their job is done when the police arrive on the scene. It's important to emphasize that teachers need to remain with their students until all students have been reunited with their families. This will assist with accountability.

For a variety of reasons, teachers may be unable to do so. They themselves could be parents and need to retrieve their own children. Additionally, the stress of an evacuation and reunification may impact their abilities to fill the role. Sometimes they will only require a short break, while at other times they need some extended attention. Be sure to include teachers in the process and training. Inform them of counseling resources beforehand and have mental health professionals available as a part of your reunification team.

Transportation Roles and Duties

Transportation Leader: Whether the district runs its own buses or the service is contracted out, the Transportation Leader should be involved in all planning, drilling, and training for reunification. The District Transportation Coordinator must be notified of any relocation so they can plan for bussing support.

Ideally, the reunification site is already established and within walking distance so that the school is not dependent on other means of transportation. However, in some situations it may be best to evacuate students further away from the site; thus, coordination must occur with district and/or community transportation personnel to plan for the use of district transportation in emergency situations.

Transportation to and from the reunification site must include explicit consideration of students with disabilities and special needs. For some of these students, an individual evacuation plan may be necessary.

The Transport Team at the impacted school has these priorities:

- Assemble a master student roster, teacher roster, and guest roster
- Identify and notify the reunification site
- Provide safe transport of students and staff to the reunification site
- Assign District personnel to go to the receiving health facilities if there are injuries, in coordination with Incident Command

Preparation

- Practice this process with staff in their assigned roles without students present.
- Ensure reunification cards are printed and in the office go-bag.
- Have a written Crisis Response Plan and ensure staff know the plan, including relocation sites.

A tabletop exercise is a great way to practice; talk through possible scenarios and practice thinking about what each of their roles is in the process. This exercise should be done at building safety team meetings. If you have any questions or need assistance in these tabletop exercises, reach out to the Executive Director of Equity or the District Safety Lead.

Moving from Lockdown to Reunification

A violent event should trigger a campus lockdown, and 911 activation is part of that process. Law enforcement will arrive quickly and move directly to the threat (or last known location) to neutralize the threat. In this time period, people should be using their situational awareness to determine the safest option: Run, Hide, or Fight. Once someone leaves the building, the need to enact reunification procedures begins.

I Love You Guys Resource

I love you Guys website guidance. *SRM-V3.pdf*

Clerical Information

BSD Version:	*BSD F3P Procedure*
Date Adopted:	*11/17/26*
Legal Reference(s):	*16 VSA §§ 1480, 1481*
Policy Reference:	Fire and Emergency Preparedness Drills (F3)

Appendix A: Reunification Roles and Duties

The following outlines the roles and duties of the Reunification Team. Not all these roles need to be filled for every reunification. For detailed tasks, see the Job Action Sheets found at iloveuguys.org. *SRM-V3.pdf*

Accountant: Assemble rosters of who is on-site and assist with identifying missing students or staff. (In a very small reunification, one person can fill the role of Accountant and Checker.)

Checker: Verify ID and confirm the person is on the emergency contact roster. Direct families to the accountant or the Reunification Area.

Check-in Area Supervisor: Establish and manage the check-in process. Supervise checkers and accountants.

Class Leaders/Teachers: Teachers and staff who arrive with students and remain in the Student Assembly Area to manage students. Additional people may be assigned to this task.

Communication (Internal): Facilitate radio and other communication needs among staff, as directed by the Supervisor. Check the school's voicemail throughout the process to account for student whereabouts.

Exit Accountant: Collect the bottom slip of the Reunification Card and check students out once reunified. (Can be combined with the Exit Director role.)

Exit Director: The final person students and families see during the reunification process. They are available to answer any questions. Their role is to be a friendly face who offers a wave or hug. (The school principal often fills this role.)

Facilities: Coordinate any physical plant needs.

Finance/Administration Chief: Establish and manage administrative staff.

Flow Monitor: Assist with guiding traffic flow and assisting families as needed.

Greeter: Help coordinate the family lines and explain the process. Help verify parents without ID. (Your friendliest staff members are good in this role.)

Greeter Supervisor: Establish and manage the greeting area; supervise greeters.

Liaison Officer: Communicate with Fire, Medical, or Law Enforcement.

Logistics Chief: Establish and manage logistical staff.

Medical Staff: Nurses or EMS personnel on-site

Mental Health Supervisor: Oversee the coordination of mental health practitioners from a variety of agencies.

School Nutrition Director: Provide snacks and water. (This role should be filled by a school nutrition employee at the District level who should be contacted to arrange delivery of necessary items).

Operations Chief: Establish and manage operational staff.

Planning Chief: Establish and manage planning staff.

Public Information Officer (PIO): Communicate with parents and press, if appropriate. Coordinate use of mass calls or text messages. May be combined with the communications role. This role should be assigned in collaboration with the Superintendent's office, who will likely provide the Communication Specialist to support this role.

Reunification Incident Commander: Coordinate Priorities, Objectives, Strategies, and Tactics for an accountable, safe reunification of students with parents.

Runner: Take the bottom of the Reunification Card to the Assembly Area, locate the student, and bring them to the Reunification Area. Ask the student, "Are you okay going home with this person?" (There's a lot of walking involved, so consider that when assigning people to this role.)

Reunification Area Supervisor: Establish and manage the reunification area. Supervise Reunifiers.

Safety Officer: Liaison between law enforcement and school. Observe the site and remedy safety concerns.

Scribe: Document events. A yellow pad is sufficient. This includes all activities, updates, and actions, and the time those took place.

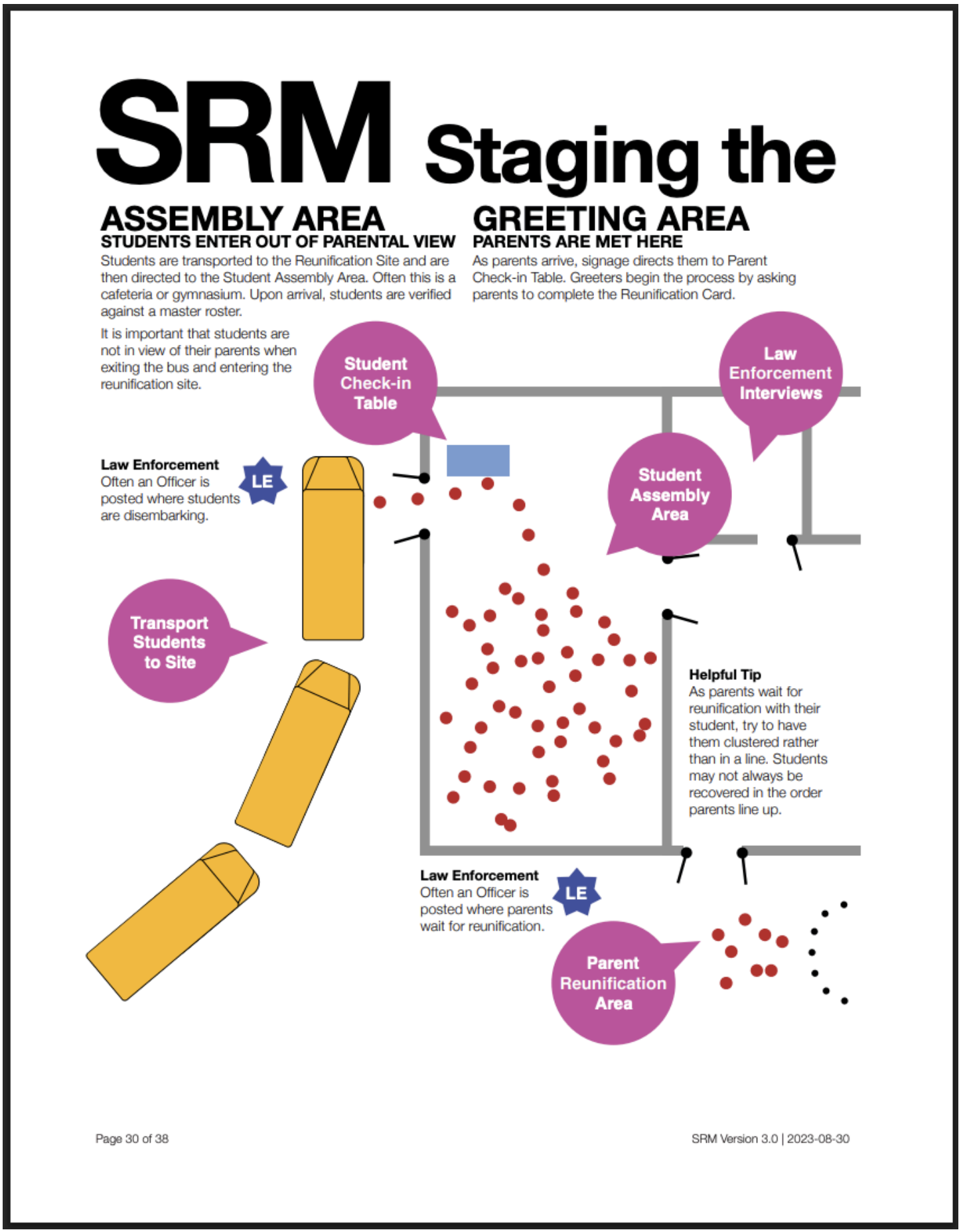
Student Assembly Supervisor: Establish and manage the Student Assembly Area.

Supervisor: This is the Principal/Director of Program who will interface with PIO and the Internal Communications Person.

Transportation Leader: Direct transportation needs. May become a supervisor position.

School-based Mental Health Professionals (Counselors/School Psychs/Clinicians): Check in with the Safety Officer. Stay present near the parent check-in area. Provide student/family support and assistance when needed.

Appendix B: Staging the Reunification Site (Visuals)



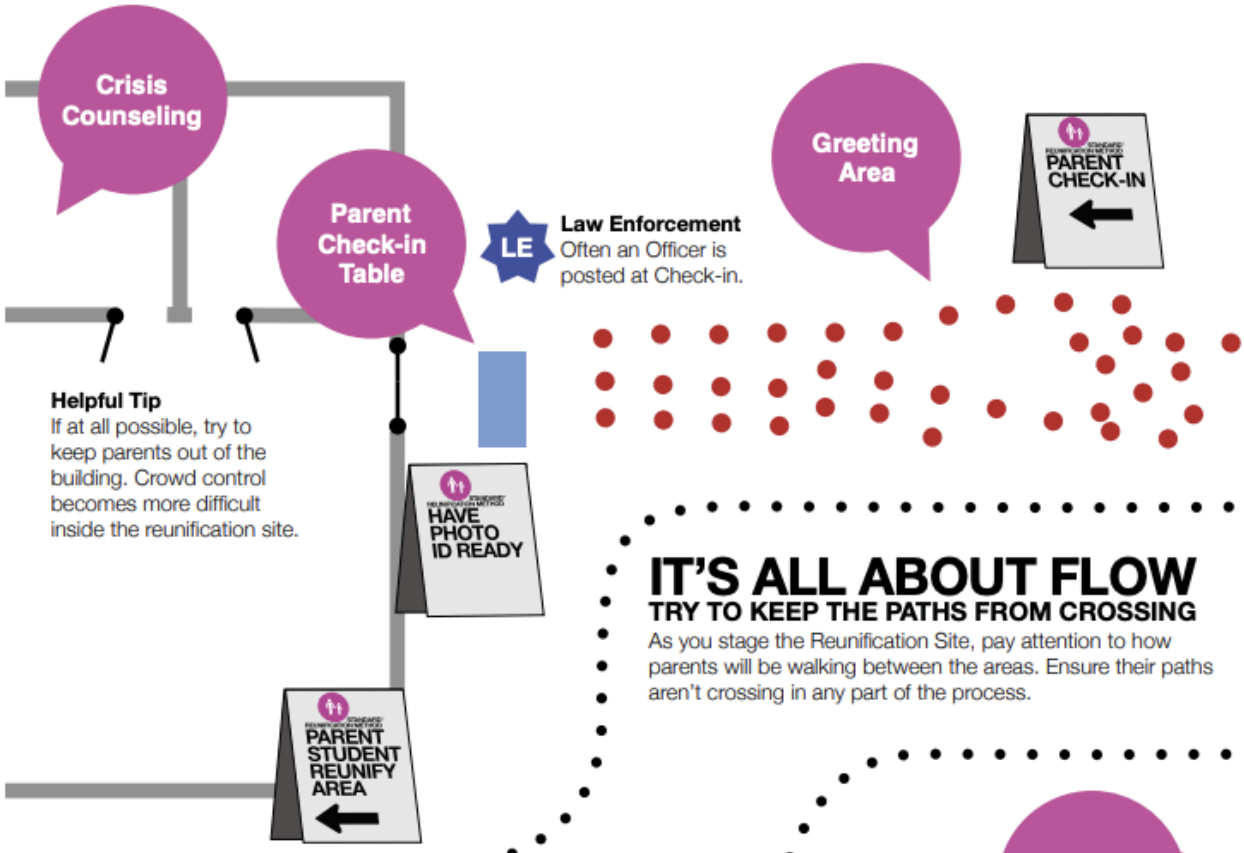
Reunification Site

CHECK-IN TABLE
SET UP MULTIPLE LINES

Establish parallel check-in lines based on first initial of last name. Checkers verify ID and custody.

REUNIFICATION AREA
PARENT STUDENT REUNIFICATION

As their tasks are completed, Greeters and Checkers can be reassigned as Reunifiers.



Appendix C: Reunification Card Instructions

®STANDARD REUNIFICATION METHOD

STUDENT/PARENT REUNIFICATION

Circumstances may occur at the school that require parents to pick up their students in a formalized, controlled release. The process of controlled release is called a reunification and may be necessary due to weather, a power outage, hazmat event, danger outside the school or if a crisis occurs at the school. The Standard Reunification Method is a protocol that makes this process more predictable and less chaotic for all involved.

Because a controlled release is not a typical end of school day event, a reunification may occur at a different location than the school a student attends. If this location is another school, then those students may be subject to a controlled release as well.

NOTIFICATION

Parents may be notified in a number of ways. The school or district may use its broadcast phone or text message system. In some cases, students may be asked to send a text message to their parents. A reunification text message from a student may look something like this: "*The school has closed, please pick me up at 3:25 at the main entrance. Bring your ID.* "

PARENT/GUARDIAN EXPECTATIONS

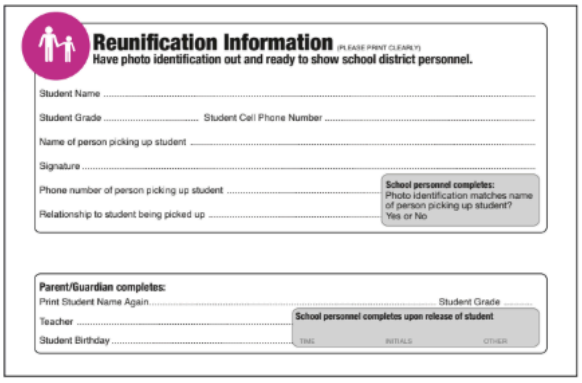
If a parent or guardian is notified that a controlled release and reunification is needed, there are some expectations that parents or guardians should be aware of. First, bring identification. That will streamline things during reunification. Second, be patient. Reunification is a process that protects both the safety of the student and provides for an accountable change of custody from the school to a recognized custodial parent or guardian.

WHAT IF A PARENT CAN'T PICK-UP THEIR STUDENT?

When a parent can't immediately go to the reunification site, students will only be released to individuals previously identified as a student's emergency contact. Otherwise, the school will hold students until parents can pick up their student.

WHAT IF THE STUDENT DROVE TO SCHOOL?

There may be instances where a student may not be allowed to remove a vehicle from the parking lot. In this case, parents are advised to recover the student. In some circumstances, high school students may be released on their own.



Reunification Information (PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY)
Have photo identification out and ready to show school district personnel.

Student Name .....
Student Grade ..... Student Cell Phone Number .....
Name of person picking up student .....
Signature .....
Phone number of person picking up student .....
Relationship to student being picked up .....

School personnel completes:
Photo identification matches name of person picking up student?
Yes or No

Parent/Guardian completes:
Print Student Name Again ..... Student Grade .....
Teacher .....
Student Birthday .....

School personnel completes upon release of student
TIME INITIALS OTHER

HOW IT WORKS

For students, the school asks that students be orderly and quiet while waiting. Students may be asked to text a message to their parents or guardians. Students are also asked not to send other text messages either in or out of the school or reunification area. Keeping the cellular network usage at a minimum may be important during a reunification.

REUNIFICATION CARDS

For parents, there are a couple of steps. If a parent is driving to the school, greater awareness of traffic and emergency vehicles is advised. Parents should park where indicated and not abandon vehicles. Parents are asked to go to the Reunification "Check In" area and form lines based on the first letter of their student's last name. While in line, parents are asked to fill out a reunification card. This card is perforated and will be separated during the process. Some of the same information is repeated on both the top and separated bottom of the card. Parents are asked to complete all parts of the card.

In the case of multiple students being reunified, a separate card for each student needs to be completed.

BRING ID TO CHECK IN

During check in, identification and custody rights are confirmed. The card is separated and the bottom half given back to the parent.

From the "Check In" area parents are directed to the "Reunification" area. There, a runner will take the bottom half of the card and take it to the Student Assembly Area to recover the student or students.

Parents should be aware that in some cases, they may be invited into the building for further information.

INTERVIEWS AND COUNSELING

In some cases, parents may be advised that a law enforcement investigation is underway and may be advised that interviews are necessary. In extreme cases, parents may be pulled aside for emergency or medical information.

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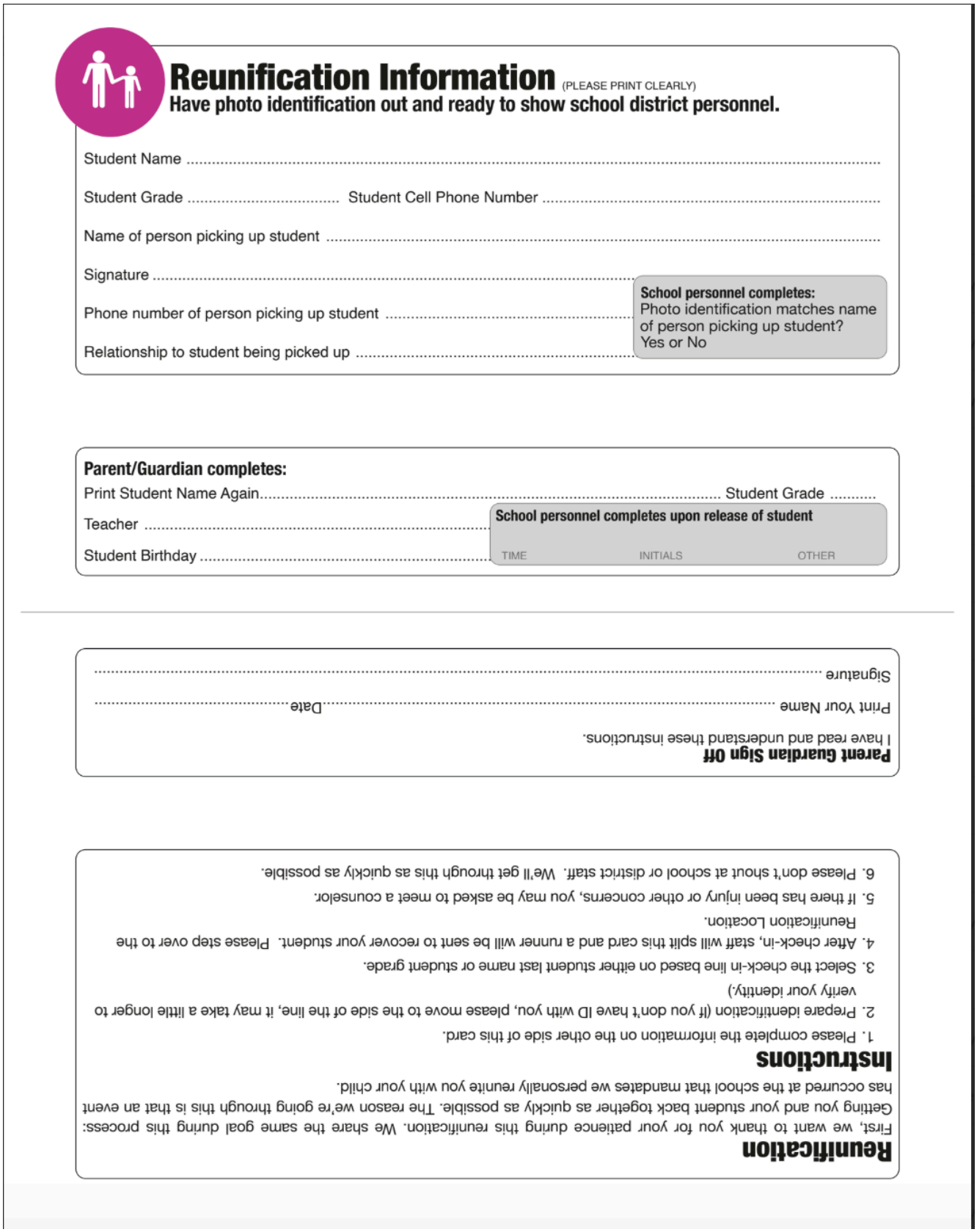
Appendix D: Reunification Card - Reunification Card - EN



Reunification Information (PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY)

Have photo identification out and ready to show school district personnel.

Student Name .....

Student Grade ..... Student Cell Phone Number .....

Name of person picking up student .....

Signature .....

Phone number of person picking up student .....

Relationship to student being picked up .....

School personnel completes:
Photo identification matches name of person picking up student?
Yes or No

Parent/Guardian completes:

Print Student Name Again..... Student Grade .....

Teacher .....

Student Birthday .....

School personnel completes upon release of student

TIME INITIALS OTHER

Parent Guardian Sign Off

I have read and understand these instructions.

Print Your Name ..... Date.....

Signature .....

Reunification

First, we want to thank you for your patience during this reunification. We share the same goal during this process: Getting you and your student back together as quickly as possible. The reason we're going through this is that an event has occurred at the school that mandates we personally reunite you with your child.

Instructions

1. Please complete the information on the other side of this card.
2. Prepare identification (if you don't have ID with you, please move to the side of the line, it may take a little longer to verify your identity.)
3. Select the check-in line based on either student last name or student grade.
4. After check-in, staff will split this card and a runner will be sent to recover your student. Please step over to the Reunification Location.
5. If there has been injury or other concerns, you may be asked to meet a counselor.
6. Please don't shout at school or district staff. We'll get through this as quickly as possible.