

BRIDGEPORT EXEMPTED VILLAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Dear Parents,

We as a district are trying to prepare our students and staff with proactive strategies to use in the event that an armed intruder situation would ever arise at school. Therefore, we will be implementing ALICE (Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, Evacuate) Training district wide.

On November 7, 2014 we will be holding LIVE ALICE training scenarios. The trainings will take place under the direction of the Belmont County Sheriff's Office along with the local First Responders.

The Elementary students will have their training beginning at 8:30 a.m. These trainings will be grade level appropriate and will not be as in-depth as the Middle and High School Sessions. Please make note, at 12:30 p.m., the Elementary Students will be dismissed so that the afternoon training with the Middle and High School students can take place. There will be no afternoon pre-school this day.

The Middle and High School training sessions will also be held on November 7, beginning at 12:30 p.m. These students will be on their normal schedule, unlike the Elementary. On November 3, the Belmont County Sherriff's Office will meet with the middle school students at 9:00 a.m. and high school students at 10:00 a.m. to discuss ALICE and the upcoming training.

We are hoping that we never have to use this training, but it is better to be proactive and train students and staff should the event arise. We feel that the training directed by the Belmont County Sherriff's Office will be an asset in keeping our students and staff safe.

There are parent meetings planned to discuss the upcoming ALICE trainings. We invite you to come to the meetings and find out what ALICE is and ask questions. Parents play an important part in school safety as well. The parent meetings will be held as follows:

October 2, 2014	Parent Teacher Conferences	5:00, 6:00, and 7:00 p.m.	Media Center
October 15, 2014	Before the Board Meeting	5:00 p.m.	Cafetorium
November 4, 2014	Teacher In-Service Day / Voting	10:00 a.m.	Cafetorium

We have included some useful information on ALICE. If you should have any questions, please contact the school district. We thank you in advance for your cooperation and understanding.

Sincerely,

Ted C. Downing

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ALICE Information

The ALICE Training Institute is changing how *schools, universities, places of worship, hospitals, and businesses* respond to armed intruders. ALICE (Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, Evacuate) is a set of proactive strategies that increase chances of survival during an armed intruder event. While no one can guarantee no casualties or injuries, we can guarantee that passing on knowledge will empower people with options of survival.

Are the ALICE tactics (Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, Evacuate) sequential in nature?

ALICE is NOT sequential nor is it meant to be a check list of things to do. It is a list of options that can be used to stay safe in the highly unlikely event of a violent intruder. As the situation develops, it is possible that students and staff will need to use more than one option. During an active shooter event, staff will rarely have all the information they need to make a fully informed decision about which option is best.

While they should follow the plan and any instructions given during the event, often they will have to rely on their own judgment to decide which option will best protect lives.

Is the adoption of the ALICE protocol an admission that the schools are not safe?

Schools are some of the safest places for our children. However, just like practicing monthly fire drills, it's important that staff & students know how to respond in the very unlikely event of an armed intruder.

Schools are some of the safest places for our children because most schools practice evacuation drills for fires and protective measures for tornadoes, but far fewer schools practice for active shooter situations. To be prepared for an active shooter event, schools should train their staff, students, and families, as appropriate, in what to expect and how to react. Best practices include the involvement of students in the training. Age appropriate exercise should be considered by the school based on the ages of the students. In a study of 84 active shooter events that occurred between 2000 and 2010, 34 percent involved schools (*FNI*).

General Tips for ALICE

The optional response protocols in ALICE makes age appropriate training very easy to accomplish. This concept is not new, but modeled after the Stranger-Danger(c) program which also starts at an early age (teaching the child his home address) and progresses over time to include not talking with strangers to yelling, kicking and running away from strangers.

With ALICE, as a child progresses through school, additional response protocols, that are age appropriate, are added to the training curriculum. User-level training conducted by the ALICE Training Institute will always include age appropriate messaging for each of the following grade-bands. This training includes discussion based exercises and emergency drills.

- Pre-K thru 2nd grade
- 3rd thru 4th grade
- 5th thru 8th grade (partial Counter using only noise, movement and distraction)
- 9th thru 12th grade (full Counter with swarm technique – no fighting)

When you want a child to do a certain thing (or not do something), we recommend using the smallest reason that the child will consider valid. If the child agrees that it is a valid reason, they will understand and comply, and you will not have terrified them. Our age appropriate training allows us to create confidence and empowerment in the younger children as well as adults that is so often referred to in the testimonials we receive.

Discussing ALICE in a positive, age-appropriate, open and reassuring manner, will help make our children prepared to deal with life's realities.

General Tips for Parents & Teachers.

The tragedy that took place in Newtown, Connecticut is incomprehensible; children and adults alike are struggling with what to think and feel. As parents however, while it is a difficult subject, it is important to talk with our children about the events that took place. In fact, experts say that avoiding the topic can actually make the shooting seem more eminent and threatening in children's minds.

Experts also say that when it comes to traumatic events in general, a child does not have to personally experience it to feel the negative effects. With such widespread media coverage of the school shooting, many children anxiously watched this tragedy unfold, along with us adults. Even if you have tried to shield your adolescent from the horrific event, it is highly unlikely that he/she will not hear about it at school or learn more details through friends or social media.

- **Start the conversation and listen carefully:** Begin by asking what your child knows about the occurrence and what they are feeling. Listen closely for misinformation, misconceptions, and for underlying concerns and fears.
- **Reassurance is the key:** The concern for re-occurrence is likely on their minds. Children need to hear that you are doing exactly what you need to do to keep them safe at home and that school officials are taking every precaution necessary to keep them safe at their school. They also need to be reminded that their only job at school is to focus on learning and enjoying their time with their friends and classmates.
- **Encourage questions:** Without dwelling on frightening details, provide your child with accurate answers to their questions, and gently correct misinformation or misconceptions, when possible. Do not make this a one-time conversation; additional questions are likely to arise for your child as event details continue to emerge. Also, do not be afraid to acknowledge that you do not have all the answers.
- **Limit media exposure:** According to experts on child trauma, it is important to limit your adolescent's exposure to repeated images and sounds of the shooting. For younger children, experts say to not allow them to see or hear any shooting-related TV/radio messages. What may not be upsetting to an adult, may be very upsetting and confusing to a child. Be aware that if the TV or radio is on, children

of all ages are likely to be tuned in, even if they do not appear to be paying attention. It is also important, as adults, to limit our media exposure related to the shooting, for our own mental health.

- **Share your feelings:** It is ok to express our sadness and empathy for the victims and their families with our children. At the same time, it is important to share ideas for coping. It can be helpful for children and adults to actively do something to support the families of Sandy Hook. For example, some schools are encouraging their students to wear green/white (Sandy Hook Elementary school colors) to show their support, while at home or in churches and synagogues, many families are joining together in prayer. Consider ideas on what you can do as a family.
- **Look for signs of anxiety and stress in your child:** In times of stress, such as this one, children and teens may have difficulty with their behavior, concentration and attention. If your child's reaction to this or any other traumatic event continues, contact your pediatrician or family physician for referral to a mental health professional.

It is difficult to try to comprehend such an act of violence, much less, have to explain it to our children. But nonetheless, it is vitally important to talk about it with our children. We must also help them understand there are no right or wrong emotions and that a wide range of reactions is completely normal and expected. We also encourage you to keep the conversation going and continue to provide your children with opportunities to talk about what happened, how they are feeling and what concerns them in the days, weeks and months ahead.