

Parent FAQ's about ALICE school safety drills

Q: What is ALICE and ALICE training?

A: As part of updating the district's safety plan, a new safety protocol called ALICE will be implemented in the unlikely event of an armed intruder in one of our school buildings. This training encourages staff and students to respond based on their situation, rather than rely on centralized instructions in dynamic times of crisis.

In August 2016, a group of OASD administrators attended an intensive two-day ALICE training session. This training was also conducted at each school site, with all teachers and support staff at the beginning of the school year.

Our principals and teachers will begin to introduce the ALICE strategies to students during drills and practices that will be conducted during this school year.

ALICE is a federally endorsed safety protocol. **The letters ALICE stand for Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter and Evacuate:**

- **Alert** – inform people of the threat, giving as much information as possible.
- **Lockdown** – Students and staff can choose to lockdown and barricade the room that they are in if they determine that it is not safe to evacuate.
- **Inform** – pass on as much information as possible to others and to First Responders, including calling 911.
- **Counter** – an effort of last resort, if an armed intruder is able to get into the space they are in, individuals can counter with distraction or other tactics. Staff are being trained to use every effort to stop the intruder, instead of relying on the traditional lockdown and hide response.
- **Evacuate** – If it is safe to do so, all are encouraged to evacuate the building, and remove themselves from the threat.

During ALICE training, staff and students are trained in different options for responding to a school intruder who is intent on doing harm. In certain circumstances, the “lock the door and hide” strategy might be appropriate. In some cases, the teacher and students might take precautions to barricade the entrance(s) of the classroom. Under certain conditions, it might be the best decision for the teacher and students to flee the building. The goal of ALICE training is that the strategies learned will increase the chances that our staff and students might survive if a terrible circumstance of an armed intruder ever were to occur.

Q: Are teachers and staff expected to follow ALICE in order? Are you supposed to Alert, then lockdown, then inform?

A: ALICE is not intended to be a checklist of things to do. It is a list of choices, with accompanying strategies that are options for our staff to help themselves and students stay safe in the highly unlikely event of an armed intruder. Some may choose to evacuate and some may choose to lockdown and barricade. Others may be forced to counter if an armed intruder is able to enter the space they are in. ALICE trains people to know they have choices in an emergency situation.

Q: Why change to these different protocols?

A: We believe that all OASD schools are the safest place for our students to be. Just like practicing what we should do in a fire with our monthly fire drills, we want to be sure that we will know what to do if an armed intruder is in a school. All our schools are equipped with a number of safeguards, some seen and others unseen, to keep our students safe. In addition, since we know that violence has become all too frequent in our world, the strategies and mental preparation we use in ALICE preparation are transferable to any public venue our students may find themselves in where a crisis may occur.

We have to come to the realization that a violent intruder event can happen any time, any place and for any reason. There is a new standard-of-care which emphasizes the need for proactive, options-based, strategies, which means that we have a responsibility to those in our care and employment to do all we can to prepare them for this rare event, not only in our location but wherever they may find themselves. The federal government recommendations, as well as major law enforcement associations support these strategies. ALICE Training is the model upon which these official recommendations were built.

Q: What does it mean to “counter”?

A: The main intent of **Counter** is to distract the intruder, not try to physically take on the intruder. An example of counter would be to throw objects at an intruder for a distraction. Being passive or static has typically not shown to be an effective response in most Active Shooter events. There are examples within recent events of school violence where the difference of passive and active responses determined survival chances. A different approach is needed to help keep our students and staff safe.

Confronting a violent intruder should never be required in any non-law enforcement job description. How each staff member chooses to respond if directly confronted by a violent intruder is up to them.

Q: How will parents be notified if their child’s school is experiencing a crisis?

A: Notification will be sent out using all methods of school district communication, including an email and phone call from School Messenger, website updates, media alerts, text messages, social media, and any other tactic that we have at our means. Families are encouraged to review their School Messenger email and phone number information to ensure that they are receiving school messages in the manner they desire by logging into Family Access.

Q: How will we know my child will be safe after the emergency?

A: In the event of a full evacuation, children would be transported to safe evacuation sites off of school grounds where they will be reunited with parents. Parents will be informed about these locations through direct communication.

Q: Will the local police municipalities be in schools to help teachers practice scenarios and possibilities for an active shooter situation?

A: The Oconomowoc Police Department and OASD have trained staff in the ALICE Protocol. This training included different scenarios and drills that imitated an Active Shooter situation. Staff will share what they have learned with our students in an age appropriate way, and teach them the ALICE procedures through the course of the year.

In a crisis, law enforcement is on their way as quickly as possible, but we must learn to help ourselves before they arrive. Just as the fire department equips us with fire extinguishers and sprinkler systems, and EMS trains us in using AED for heart attacks, the law enforcement community is training us in our response options to be used before they are able to arrive in an active intruder situation.

Q: Where can I go for more information about ALICE?

A: Here is a link to information about ALICE. We will also be adding information to the district website. Contact your school principal with specific questions. <http://www.alicetraining.com/>

Q: Since parents do not participate in safety drills they often find themselves curious about drill procedures. How do you recommend parents learn about how drills are conducted?

A: It is our recommendation that parents engage in age appropriate conversation with their child or children following all safety drills. Should a parent have a specific question please contact the building principal.

Q: Students readiness for this information varies based on age. How will this be communicated to students in age-appropriate ways?

A: We want our children to be prepared for everything, including if an unsafe person was to enter our school. Administrators, student services staff, and teachers will take the principles and tactics taught in the ALICE training and present the information in non-fearful, empowering ways. We will take into account a children's developmental readiness to ensure that students feel safe and have opportunities to talk about their feelings and reactions.

At this time, there is no plan to have simulated shooters in our buildings while students are learning about ALICE. All learning will be staff-directed and student-centered. Parents are encouraged, if they wish, to contact their principals with specific questions and concerns.

Q: What resources exist to talk to my child at home about this?

A: You can contact your site administrator or school counselor to access materials that might be helpful to share at home depending on your child's needs.