



LACEY TOWNSHIP SCHOOL DISTRICT

A Tradition Of Pride · A Tradition Of Excellence

VANESSA P. CLARK, PH.D.
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

January 2020

Dear Lacey Township School District Parent:

Over the past several years the nation has seen a dramatic increase in school violence and school shootings. As the experts analyze these horrific events, it is apparent that we need to do more, not only taking steps in an attempt to prevent the event from occurring but training students and staff on procedures that we all need to survive an active shooter in our schools.

The Lacey Township School District has taken great steps in the matter of securing our school buildings (i.e. installing security vestibules, establishing visitor management protocols, and hiring Class III Officers), but one question still needs to be answered. What if?

In the past, schools across the nation have answered that question with a method we call “Lockdown.” That system is designed that in the event an unauthorized person enters the school buildings or grounds, a “Lockdown alert” is given and students and staff are instructed to lock their classrooms with lights out and to hide in a far corner of the classroom while remaining calm and quiet. This is probably the procedure that you as parents followed some years ago. However, does this answer our question? History has shown that “Lockdown” is a tool that we all should use, but is it the only tool that we should be using? The answer to that can be found by the number of students that have been killed or seriously wounded during school shootings, students that were shot and killed hiding under a desk or huddled in a corner of a classroom, library, or cafeteria. Can we expect a fully armed person that enters our school buildings with the intent to do harm to our children to simply leave when they find that the classroom door is locked? Knowing what we know about active shooters in school buildings and other public places, the answer is NO. They have already made the decision to kill when they armed themselves and entered that building.

Another known fact is that in almost all of the shootings that occur in schools, the shooter usually creates as much carnage as he can in a short period of time and then kills himself before police even arrive. So, how do we give our students and staff a greater chance of surviving an active shooter? We give them more tools.

The Lacey Township School District has adopted and began implementation of a new procedure that we, as well as experts across the country, believe will increase the chance of survival during an active shooter incident. We started by training the staff and then holding several parent/community presentations, which can be found on our website. This new procedure will teach our staff and students the A.L.I.C.E. system. What does it mean? ALICE is an acronym for:

- Alert Get the word out! *Armed Intruder* in the building instead of the use of any codes. Use clear, concise language to convey the type and specific location of the event.
- Lockdown Good starting point. We will continue to Lockdown students in secure areas.
- Inform Continuation of the use of clear, concise language to convey the type and specific location of the event. Communication keeps the shooter off balance and allows for good decision-making.
- Counter Apply skills to distract, confuse, and gain control.
- Evacuate Reduces the number of potential targets for the shooter, and reduces the chances of victims resulting from friendly fire when help arrives.

The philosophy of ALICE is to use technology and information in a way so that staff and students can make informed decisions in a crisis, remove as many people as possible from the danger zone, and provide realistic training so that those involved have a better chance of surviving.

In short, using the above ALICE method we will teach our students and staff multiple tools to use in order to evade an armed intruder/active shooter who enters our school, including:

1. Listen carefully to the location and type of event.
2. Get to and/or remain in a secure area until it is safe to evacuate.
3. Should an armed intruder/active shooter invade their area, apply skills to Distract, Confuse and Gain Control.
4. As soon as it is safe to do so, Evacuate.

Please understand, in **NO WAY** are we asking or teaching our students or staff to make any attempt to subdue an armed gunman outside of their secure area. However, we will provide them the knowledge that if faced with a **life or death situation**, there are methods that can be applied to greatly enhance their chance of survival. The methods that will be taught in the event an armed gunman directly confronts them are:

- Cause distractions to interfere with the ability to shoot accurately.
- Cause as much chaos in the room as possible to create sensory overload.
- Do not be a stationary target.
- How to control the attacker using bodyweight, not strength (not for younger children).
- How to interact with responding law enforcement.

Training will emphasize that the best way to survive an active shooter is to escape. When that is not possible, being mentally prepared and having been given the authority and ability to act will save lives.

Starting in November 2019, our younger students in Grades PreK to 4, began using the book *“I’m Not Scared...I’m Prepared!”* with their teachers. *I’m Not Scared...I’m Prepared!* enhances the concepts taught by the ALICE protocols, and makes them applicable to younger children in a non-fearful way. By using this book, children can develop a better understanding of what needs to be done if they ever encounter a “dangerous someone.”

Starting in early January 2020, our older students in Grades 5-12 will begin training by watching a video developed and produced by our Television and Video Programmer Specialist, Mr. Jeremy Muermann. The video provides an overview of the ALICE protocols and also provides a better understanding of actionable steps that students and staff can take if they ever encounter an active shooter.

In late January 2020, we will practice our first active shooter drill. More detailed information will be forthcoming regarding these drills. In the meantime, if you have any questions about the contents of this communication, please don’t hesitate to contact your child’s principal.

Sincerely,

Vanessa P. Clark, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools