



WAUSAU SCHOOL DISTRICT

Longfellow Administration Center

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Dr. Keith W. Hiltz, Superintendent of Schools

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Parent and Guardian Tips to Support Students Before and After Required ALICE Drills

The Wausau School District's priority is both the physical and psychological safety of students. Part of that work includes ALICE drills. The training provided in ALICE drills provides the rehearsal necessary to prepare students and staff if there is ever a reported threat to safety. We practice ALICE drills twice a year, and parents are encouraged to discuss them with their children. As parents, it is important that we talk with our children about the challenging topic of violence in schools. Experts say that avoiding the topic can actually make it seem more imminent and threatening in children's minds. Here are some tips from mental health experts about talking to your children about school violence.

Before: Your school's next drill will take place sometime between now and Spring Break. You will receive notification from the school the week of the ALICE drill so that you know when it is happening.

- Experts 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 recent tragedies in schools, many children anxiously watched footage of these events along with their families. Even if you tried to shield your child from the horrific events, it is likely that he/she will hear about it at school or learn more details through friends or social media.
- Prepare your children by setting expectations. You know your child best and your guidance will help them. Let them know that school is a safe place and that part of the job of teachers and school staff is to practice safety skills. "Just like you practice fire drills at school, you also practice ALICE drills so that you know exactly what to do to stay safe in an emergency."
- Make connections to safety habits you already practice. Explain that the ALICE drill is another safety habit just like the many safety habits you do on a regular basis, for example, wearing seatbelts and bike helmets.
- Though it may be new to your child, the ALICE drill will be best learned through practicing. Self-confidence comes from trying things that are hard and getting better each time.
- Follow your child's lead. If they seem worried or uncomfortable, help them to identify their feelings and talk with them about ways of handling them. Start the conversation and listen carefully. Begin by asking what your children know about the topic of school violence. Listen closely for misinformation, misconceptions, and for underlying concerns and fears.
- Let your child know that schools perform ALICE drills throughout the school year and that they are announced as a drill. Consider your child's unique needs. If you are concerned about how your child will handle the lockdown drill, reach out to the school and partner with your child's teacher to address your concerns.

After: Follow your child's lead.

- Let your child know the school made you aware that there was an ALICE drill that day. Children feel safer when they know that families and schools are working together.
- Ask if they would like to talk about it and let their comments guide you. Children process events in many ways. Some children would prefer not to talk about it, which is okay, too. Some children may simply want to spend some time together in a shared activity with few words. Young children often process through their play.
- If they share that they felt okay about the drill, reinforce that the purpose of the drill is to keep them safe by knowing what to do.
- If they share that they felt scared, sad, or nervous, acknowledge the feeling while directing the student toward positive coping skills. Reassurance is the key: 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.

Thank you and be sure to reach out to your child's principal if you have any specific questions about the drill.

Other Resources to help:

<https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources/school-safety-and-crisis/mitigating-psychological-effects-of-lockdowns>

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/safety-prevention/all-around/Pages/Actions-Schools-Are-Taking-to-Make-Themselves-Safer.aspx>

It is the mission of the Wausau School District to advance student learning, achievement, and success.