Tips for Parents

Talking to your child about Active Intruder Situations

What is Options-Based Active Intruder Training?

O'Fallon Township High School has adopted options-based active intruder protocols based on the recommendation of the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. These agencies recommend that all school districts teach students and staff options that may be available to them in an intruder situation.

The foundation of our options-based active intruder program is the 4E© concept. The 4E's represent **E**ducate, **E**vade, **E**scape and **E**ngage.

The **EDUCATE** option is where students learn and practice the terminology and skills taught in the 4E© program. They also learn to keep their school safe by observing and reporting when they see or hear something wrong.

Students learn about the **EVADE** option by locking doors, turning off the lights, covering the window, and using items in the room to barricade the door.

The **ESCAPE** option instructs students and staff to leave the building, when they believe it is safe to do so, by the quickest possible path.

The **ENGAGE** option is where students are instructed that when their lives are in imminent danger and no other option is viable, they can distract by throwing anything available and fight back to maximize their chances of survival. *Engaging is only used as an option of last resort*.

Frequently Asked Questions

What should I say to my child if they have concerns about an intruder coming into their school?

While the subject of active intruders can be unsettling for students and staff, our ultimate goal is survival.

If your child is concerned that something like this might happen at their school, remind them that it is necessary to be prepared and practice active intruder drills just as they do fire drills, tornado drills and earthquake drills.

Administrators, teachers and staff will help students learn how to think and react in an emergency situation.

Why did the District change to an options-based active intruder model instead of the "traditional" lockdown?

In the past, locking down a facility was the only response utilized regarding an active intruder. However, research has shown that allowing staff and students to employ options when dealing with active intruders increases the chances of surviving a critical incident.

What if my child or I have specific questions or concerns about active intruder information?

If you or your child have any questions or concerns about the topic, feel free to contact the OTHS Director of Security, or your child's teacher, counselor or principal.

Make sure your child knows that they should tell an adult right away if another person talks about hurting others, themselves or obtaining any type of weapon, even if they think the person is joking.

Students should also report any potential safety issues to an adult such as a fire, a tripping hazard or an unidentified person(s) in any school building.

What type of emergency drills do students practice?

All students practice emergency drills annually. They consist of:

- Fire Drills
- Active Intruder Drills
- Earthquake Drills
- Bus Evacuation Drills
- Tornado Drills

Why should my child participate in active intruder drills?

Drills are a way for students and staff to practice and be prepared to act in a crisis. Active intruder drills are clearly identified as "***Only a Drill***", and we have members of our staff who are trained to assist students with special needs. All students should be trained so that they are not only able to use these skills taught at the school, but also in any dangerous situation they may encounter outside of school, as well.

What can I do as a parent in the event of this type of situation?
Know that in a crisis, telephone lines may become overwhelmed. Access to the school may be restricted. OTHS will initiate communication as quickly as possible, providing instructions reuniting you with your child through our secure process.

To ensure you receive timely updates, please make sure your CONTACT INFORMATION is always current. Notify the school of any changes to your address, telephone numbers and emergency contacts.

Frequently ask your child about the drills and training that they have practiced in school.

What else can I do?

You can also emphasize with your child the importance of:
1. Listening to all information that comes across the intercom system.
2. Following the instructions of the teacher or any adult in charge.
3. Taking all drills seriously so that they are prepared and know what to do in the event of an actual emergency.
4. Making sure that they report to an adult when the outside doors are propped open or left open for others.
5. Telling an adult when they know someone has plans to bring a weapon to school, whether they believe them or not.
6. Telling if someone has brought a weapon to school whether they have seen it or not.

Also, you can:
1. Have frequent discussions with your child regarding their feelings about active intruder situations.
2. Create safety plans for your child for your home, when they go outside to play or if they get lost.

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