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Editorial

Lockdown drills need to be revised to better prepare students, teachers for unexpected situations

Staff Editorial

November 6, 2015

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To be prepared for a potential crisis situation in which a volatile intruder enters the campus, students and teachers complete at least one announced and one unannounced lockdown drill a school year.

Even though the campus exceeds the Texas Education Code 37.108 requirements in terms of number of drills, the campus should do even more to ensure safety.

The whole purpose of the drills, which is to practice safety procedures in case of an emergency, often seems to be missed. Therefore, campus administration should consider modifying its current procedures to include more drills with more realistic settings and increase communication with adults on campus during the drills.

While there is some type of drill every month, lockdown drills are only performed once a semester. These drills seem to be consistently planned at a convenient time of day, around 10:20 a.m., to avoid issues of disturbing lunches and causing traffic problems during last period. Since there is no way to tell when an intruder may appear on campus, sticking to one time schedule isn't as responsible as rearranging the schedule for the day or even extending the lunch period to allow more realistic drills to happen.

Along with timing of drills, procedures also need to be revisited. Currently, teachers communicate with those patrolling the hallways by using red and green cards slipped under the door. Following the universal meaning of red and green, anyone can guess what is going on in the classroom. The red cards mean there is an issue, and the green card means that everything is all right. The cards are also an obvious signal that lets an intruder, just like a law officer, tell whether or not someone is inside the classroom.

Finally, communication needs to be increased with teachers when it comes to drills. While teachers get emails about upcoming drills and they are issued a flip chart with procedures, emails sometimes go unread and charts are easily put in the back of a desk drawer. Multiple ways of distributing information, such as hard copy and remind 101, should be used for drills, and a review of safety information should be conducted at the start of every year to keep both old and new teachers prepared.

Faculty and administration might say that more drills at different times of day, using difference procedures, would create chaos, but all these changes could lead to a safer and better prepared school environment in case the unthinkable did happen.

To better protect all, the campus should revisit and modify procedures for lockdown drills.

