

## Parent and Guardian Tips to Support Students Before, During, and After Required Lockdown Drills

Important Note: FCPS works to ensure physical and psychological safety for students, and part of that work includes lockdown drills when there is a reported threat to safety (e.g. an event in the community). FCPS does not engage in active shooter drills or use simulations of active shooters in preparing students to respond to a possible threat. The training provided in the lockdown drill provides the safety rehearsal necessary to prepare students and staff. Although we practice lockdown drills four times a year and they are not announced, parents are encouraged to discuss this information with their children.

### **Before: Set the Tone.**

- 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 lockdown 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 lockdown 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 lockdown drill will be best learned through practicing.
  - 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. For example, taking a few deep breaths, reminding themselves the drill will end soon, asking the teacher for help or staying close to a friend.
  - Let your child know that schools perform lockdown 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.

**During: You will receive notification from the school at the time of the lockdown drill or shortly after so that you know when it has happened.**

### **After: Check in.**

- Follow your child’s lead.
  - Let your child know the school made you aware that there was a lockdown 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 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 towards positive coping skills. “*Yes, sometimes we all have scary feelings. What helps you to feel safer when you are scared?*” Some things that may help them feel safer might include knowing their teacher is there with them; knowing they have responded in a way that will keep them safe. You can also share a time when you felt scared and what helped you get through it.
- Maintain routines. Following your typical home routines help everyone feel calm and safe. Most children will feel better with the passage of time and returning to their familiar routine.

If at any point you have concerns and would like to follow up with the school, please reach out. Your student’s teacher, administrators, or the school-based counselor, school psychologist or school social worker are all available to support your child.

**Resources:**

[NASP: School Safety and Crisis: Mitigating Negative Psychological Effects of School Lockdowns: Brief Guidance for Schools](#)

Craig, Susan E., Trauma-Sensitive Schools: Learning Communities Transforming Students’ Lives, K-5, Teacher’s College Press: New York (2016).

[How to Prepare Your Child with Special Needs for Lockdown Drills](#)

[School Safety during Emergencies: What Parents Need to Know](#)

[Talking to Students about Violence](#)

[13 Reasons Why Netflix Series: Considerations for Educators](#)

[Trauma Toolkit: Tools to Support the Learning and Development of Students Experiencing Childhood and Adolescent Trauma](#)