

#WeAreCarmelUnified

From the Office of the Superintendent Barb Dill-Varga, Ed.D.

School Safety Training - ALICE

The safety of our students is my number one priority as superintendent of Carmel Unified. It is undeniable that the world of my early teaching career is not the one that exists today. Because of that, I want to tell you about an important pivot we are making in our safety protocols to improve our preparedness in the unlikely event of a violent incident on our campuses.

Here is what is new and very important

Carmel Unified School District -- along with the 23 other districts in Monterey County--has made the decision to embrace and practice the ALICE protocol.

Why the change to ALICE?

For all of us, keeping students safe is our number one priority. Research into this past decade of national violent events has caused our State and Federal guidelines to change. They now recommend that schools should have *safety plans that allow for decision making and options rather than a one-size fits all traditional school lockdown* in the unlikely event of a violent critical incident.

ALICE is a nationally recognized safety program that provides a proactive set of responses to a school intruder event. It *empowers individuals to participate in their own survival by using their best judgement to make decisions based on the available information at the time.*

ALICE stands for:

ALERT: First notification of danger. Recognizing the signs of danger and receiving information about the danger from others.

LOCKDOWN: Good starting point. If Evacuation is not a safe option, barricade entry points. Prepare to Evacuate or Counter if needed.

INFORM: Communicate real time information on intruder location. Use clear language using any means possible. Call 911 when it is safe to do so.

COUNTER: As a last resort, create noise, movement, distance and distraction to reduce the intruder's ability to shoot accurately.

EVACUATE: As soon as it is safe to do so, run from danger using nontraditional exits if necessary. Rally points will be predetermined as appropriate.

Training

This past spring and summer we have provided training for all site principals and several district office leaders to ensure a solid implementation of the safety protocols.

Each CUSD school site has a trained instructor to coordinate the training of staff and students. Consultation with the CUSD School Resource Officer (Kevin Gross, SRO) and the endorsement of Monterey County Office of Education provide us with additional layers of resources and training throughout the year.

Currently, we are implementing the first phase of training for all administration and staff.

The second phase will involve students with follow-up debriefings and discussions with classroom teachers. This training for students will be age appropriate as we recognize the need to differentiate the protocol for younger students.

Our goal is to ensure that in the event of a critical violent incident, students and teachers have all the tools to react per the information they have available at the time.

I have included some frequently asked questions later in this newsletter (FAQs) which will give you in one place more information about ALICE.

Please don't hesitate to contact the principal at your child's school with any questions or concerns. CUSD will continue to put your child's safety as our top priority.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: What is ALICE and ALICE training?

A: As part of updating the district's safety plan, a new safety protocol called ALICE will be implemented in the unlikely event of a violent critical incident. This training encourages staff and students to respond based on their situation and the information available, rather than relying on centralized instructions in times of crisis.

In July 2019, CUSD administrators attended an intensive two-day ALICE training and became certified instructors for their schools. Staff began their two phase training early August.

Our principals and teachers will begin to introduce the ALICE strategies to students this fall and begin incorporating practices during drills that will be conducted during this school year.

ALICE meets federal and state guidelines to include option based response strategies in all safety plans. **The letters that spell out ALICE stand for Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter and Evacuate:**

ALERT – Inform people of the threat, giving as much information as possible.

LOCKDOWN – Students and staff can choose to lockdown and barricade the room that they are in if they determine that it is not safe to evacuate.

INFORM – Pass on as much information as possible to others and to First Responders, including calling 911.

COUNTER – An effort of last resort. If an armed intruder is able to get into the space they are in, individuals can counter with distraction or other tactics. Staff are being trained to use every effort to stop the intruder, instead of relying on the traditional lockdown and hide response.

EVACUATE – If it is safe to do so, all are encouraged to evacuate the building, and remove themselves from the threat.

During ALICE training, staff and students are trained in different options for responding to a school intruder who is intent on doing harm. In certain circumstances, the teacher and students might take precautions to barricade the entrance(s) of the classroom. Under other conditions, it might be the best decision for the teacher and students to flee the building. The goal of ALICE training is that the strategies and options learned will increase the chances of our staff and students' survival in the unlikely event of a violent critical incident.

Q: Are teachers and staff expected to follow ALICE in order? Are you supposed to Alert, then lockdown, then inform?

A: ALICE is not intended to be a checklist of things to do. It is a list of choices, with accompanying strategies that are options for our staff to help themselves and students to stay safe in the highly unlikely event of a violent critical incident. Some may choose to evacuate and some may choose to lockdown and barricade. Others may be forced to counter if an armed intruder is able to enter the space they are in. ALICE trains people to know they have choices in an emergency situation.

Q: Why change to these different protocols?

A: We believe that all CUSD schools are the safest place for our students to be. Just like practicing what we should do in a fire with our monthly fire drills, we want to be sure that we will know what to do if a violent critical incident should happen. All of our schools are equipped with a number of safeguards, some seen and others unseen, to keep our students safe. In addition, since we know that violence has become all too frequent in our world, the strategies and mental preparation we use in ALICE are transferable to any public venue our students may find themselves in where a crisis may occur.

We have to come to the realization that a violent intruder event can happen at any time, at any place, and for any reason. There is a new standard-of-care which emphasizes the need for proactive, options-based, strategies, which means that we have a responsibility to those in our care and employment to do all we can to prepare them for this rare event, not only in our location but wherever students may find themselves. ALICE protocols follow federal and state guidelines, with the Monterey County Office of Education and local law enforcement supporting these strategies.

Q: What does it mean to “counter”?

A: The main intent of Counter is to distract the intruder, not fight. An example of counter would be to throw objects at an intruder for a distraction. Being passive or static has typically not been shown to be an effective response in most violent critical incidents. There are examples within recent events of school violence where the difference between passive and active responses determined survival outcomes. A different approach is needed to help keep our students and staff safe.

Confronting a violent intruder should never be required in any non-law enforcement job description. How individual staff members choose to respond if directly confronted by a violent intruder is up to them.

Q: How will parents be notified if their child's school is experiencing a crisis?

A: Notification will be sent out using all methods of school district communication, including an email and a phone call from Blackboard as well as website updates, media alerts, text messages, social media, and any other means that we have. Families are encouraged to review their emergency information provided to CUSD to ensure email and phone number information are correct for school messages in the manner they desire. It is also strongly suggested to have a family emergency [communication plan as offered by FEMA](#) should communication be temporarily unavailable in an off-site school evacuation.

Q: How will we know my child will be safe after the emergency?

A: In the event of a full evacuation, children will be transported to safe evacuation sites off school grounds where they will reunite with parents. Parents will be informed about these locations through above mentioned communication methods.

Q: Will local law enforcement be in schools to help staff and students practice ALICE scenarios?

A: CUSD is fortunate to have a Deputy Sheriff as our School Resource Officer. He is ALICE trained and plays an intricate role to our overall safety plans including ALICE protocol. Staff will share what they have learned with our students in an age appropriate way, and teach them the ALICE procedures throughout the year.

In a crisis, law enforcement is on the way as quickly as possible, but we must learn to help ourselves before they arrive. Just as the fire department equips us with fire extinguishers and sprinkler systems, the law enforcement community is training us in our response options to be used before their arrival at a violent critical incident.

Q: Where can I go for more information about ALICE?

A: Here is a link to information about ALICE. We will also be adding information to the district website. Contact your school principal with specific questions. <http://www.alicetraining.com>

Q: Since parents do not participate in safety drills they often find themselves curious about drill procedures. How do you recommend parents learn about how drills are conducted?

A: It is our recommendation that parents engage in age appropriate conversations with their children following all safety drills. Should a parent have a specific question, please contact the school principal.

Q: Students readiness for this information varies based on age. How will this be communicated to students in age-appropriate ways?

A: We want our children to be prepared for everything, including if an unsafe person was to enter our school. Administrators, student services staff, and teachers will take the principles and tactics taught in the ALICE training and present the information in non-fearful, empowering ways. We will take into account a child's developmental readiness to ensure that students feel safe and have opportunities to talk about their feelings and reactions. Pre K to 3rd grade teacher guide will include an age appropriate book.

Please know that there is no plan to have simulated shooters in our buildings while students are learning about ALICE.

All learning will be School Resource Officer (SRO), staff-directed, and student-centered. Parents are encouraged, if they wish, to contact their principals with specific questions and concerns.

Q: What resources exist to talk to my child at home about this?

A: You can contact your school principal or school counselor to access materials that might be helpful to share at home depending on your child's needs.

Q. What additional resource from MCOE (Monterey County Office of Education) is available?

[Here is an additional resource from MCOE](#)

Progress on other safety measures

Because keeping our students safe is our number one priority in Carmel Unified, you might remember that the April 2018 edition of this newsletter provided you--our parents and employees--with updates about other steps we were taking to make improvements in this area.

Here is what we have accomplished to date:

School Resource Officer

We secured a \$500K Department of Justice Tobacco grant to fund two years for our District School Resource Officer Kevin Gross. Kevin works with our health teacher to provide valuable instruction about the dangers of vaping and using illegal substances, while also being the point person present to direct operations in times of violent threats. We are hopeful that our recent application for additional funding may be successful.

Communication with Emergency Services

We have improved our connections and communication with all of our emergency service partners throughout our 600 square mile district who assist with our Master Emergency Drill Schedule at each site.

Site Safety Assessments and Master Facilities Plan

We conducted site safety assessments to generate ideas for our 10 year Master Facilities Plan to enhance our security for each site.

Project 2020 - Security Enhancements

We are in the last years of Project 2020 which included a design and upgrade of the infrastructure to support new and better systems for security and emergency preparedness. This plan includes a design and implementation for upgraded camera security and broadcast messaging.

Social-emotional Programming

We have continued our commitment to implementing a full range of social-emotional programming to proactively find students who need our support.

Tech Tools to Provide Anonymous Tips

We continue to use tech tools such as WeTip and goGuardian which provide anonymous ways for tips to be given to find and help students in need and are seeking other solutions as they are developed.

Some additional resources in Spanish

En Espanol (Links from MCOE)

- [A.L.I.C.E. Training Video](#)
- [Atentado De Tirador Activo](#)
- [Enseñar a los niños la paz y la tolerancia](#)
- [Consejos Para La Seguridad En Las Escuelas](#)
- [Las ABC's de la Seguridad Escolar y Mantener el Balance](#)
- [Tirador Activo Como Responder](#)