

ARE YOU READY?

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Montgomery County Public Schools is committed to providing a safe and welcoming learning environment for our students and staff. Every year, each MCPS school conducts a number of emergency drills to ensure students are prepared in the case of an emergency.



Lockdown with Options

What: A safety procedure developed by law enforcement for emergency situations involving an attack on the school by an individual(s) with a weapon. Maryland passed the Safe to Learn Act of 2018 requiring this new drill.

How: Students and staff are trained in situational awareness to engage in one of the following strategies to stay safe:

- » Secure themselves in a classroom or behind a locked door, covering windows, turning off lights and remaining silent until further instruction.
- » Move quickly away from the building beyond the boundaries of the school grounds with guidance from staff.
- » When age appropriate, be prepared to defend themselves as a last resort. This may include throwing something to distract or injure the attacker.

This procedure strengthens the traditional Lockdown protocols.



Evacuation

What: A safety procedure used to exit a school when it is too dangerous to remain in the building (ex. fire, gas smell, etc.)

How: Students and staff exit the building to a designated location away from the building. Public safety officials will designate when re-entry to the school is permitted.



Shelter in Place

What: A safety procedure used when there is either a serious law enforcement incident in the community surrounding the school or when emergency services need unobstructed access inside the school building to address a medical issue or a contained incident. Instruction continues during Shelter-in-Place.

How: During a Shelter-in-Place involving a situation in the building, students remain in their classrooms (or designated area) while the issue is addressed by emergency personnel. If the incident is in the surrounding community, outdoor activities are brought inside and exterior doors remain locked.

A police officer in a uniform is speaking to a group of people in a school hallway. The officer is on the left, gesturing with his hands. A woman with glasses is sitting on the right, looking towards the officer. Other people are visible in the background, some sitting on the floor. The image has a red overlay.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS LOCKDOWN WITH OPTIONS

Why is this drill necessary?

In the wake of the school shooting tragedies last year, Maryland passed the Safe to Learn Act of 2018 which recommends that active assailant drills be revised and conducted in alignment with recent changes to best practices developed by law enforcement and other school districts. While data show schools are one of the safest places to be, we must remain vigilant in keeping our schools safe.

What is the difference between the Lockdown with Options drill and the Lockdown drill we have been doing for years?

Lockdown with Options is an enhancement of our traditional lockdown procedure based on changes in best practices. While the safest step to take when there is an active assailant on site is to be in a locked classroom, the Lockdown with Options outlines safety strategies for students and staff when they are not able to access a classroom.

Strategies include moving quickly away beyond the boundaries of the school grounds if there is opportunity to do so. Staff and students (when age appropriate) also need to understand that they should be prepared to defend themselves as a last resort. This may include throwing something at the assailant to distract or injure him or to attack the assailant if, for example, he manages to enter a classroom.

When will schools be conducting a drill?

All school staff will be trained during the first and second semesters followed by student drills in some schools either during second quarter or during second semester. Each school will inform its community when the student training will occur.

If students leave the building, where should they go, and how do they know when to return?

With guidance from staff, students should move quickly beyond the boundaries of the school far enough that they cannot see the school. Students who have left school should call 911 and also contact their family to let them know where they are. Students need to be accounted for, so they should get far enough away from school to be safe, but close enough to return to school when it is safe.

When the danger is over, police or staff will go to the boundaries of the school to tell students to return, and students should check cell phones for media announcements. MCPS is exploring various apps to help with communications during such emergency situations.

Why are we doing a training session with students instead of a more active drill where students would actually hide or run from the school?

The *Lockdown with Options* is a significant change that may cause stress and anxiety, so we need to be thoughtful in how we prepare staff and students for the new protocols. Additionally, *Lockdown with Options* drills require staff and students to be quickly decisive to either hide in a classroom or office or to leave the building. This thinking is called situational awareness which is the perception and analysis of one's surrounding environment that can influence the way a person acts. The training sessions with staff and students will emphasize situational awareness.