

## SCHOOL SAFETY DRILLS/ LEGISLATIVE PANEL INPUT

I am a retired educator, a current substitute teacher in the Town of Jamestown, a grandparent and a parent and I offer the following comments for your review.

Too often "ALICE" drills are conducted with little or no notice to educators and in a rushed, perfunctory manner to "check the box" that it has been done. I recently witnessed one in Jamestown, where I substitute teach, and I participated in/conducted many such a drill in Waltham, MA where I taught 7<sup>th</sup> grade.

The message to all children should be that it is our job- as the trusted adults in their lives, to keep them safe. First and foremost. Hard stop. THIS NEEDS TO BE DELIVERED CLEARLY but it gets completely lost when drills are conducted in a haphazard way on the fly. From there, further messaging needs to be crafted in an age-appropriate manner with the help of mental health professionals. The focus should be on reassuring children- realistically- not terrifying them.

Just as we are sensitive to all our students around trauma that might be triggered by CURRICULUM, so should we be sensitive around these drills. Parents and educators should know very clearly what the drills look like and teachers need specific grade-level training to answer student questions. The issue of "opting out" is a very difficult one to address and should be very well thought out by the commission. With the documented uptick in childhood anxiety, it is tempting to default to an opt-put policy. However, we are SCHOOLS. KNOWLEDGE is POWER. Parents and educators should be trusted to come together in the best interests of their students to address this. Above all, please trust your educators to know their students. Please do not adopt a very top-down approach: teachers are often told what to do instead of being trusted to do what is best for their students with whom they spend hours each day, 180 days per year.

Finally, it would be interesting to know what other states have done in this arena to improve the quality of such drills in the context of today's realities.

Thank you for soliciting public input.

Sincerely,

Daphne G. Meredith  
Jamestown  
617.504.5145