

NEWTON FALLS EXEMPTED VILLAGE SCHOOLS

Administrative Offices 909½ Milton Boulevard, Newton Falls, OH 44444

Paul J. Woodard
Superintendent of Schools
Phone: (330) 872-5445
Fax: (330) 872-3351
paul.woodard@neomin.org



Dawn Meeks
Treasurer
Phone: (330) 872-0862
Fax: (330) 872-3351
dawn.meeks@neomin.org

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Dear Newton Falls Exempted Village Parent/Guardian:

Over the past several years we have seen a dramatic increase in school shootings. As experts analyze these horrific events, it is apparent that we need to do more, not only in taking steps in an attempt to prevent the incident from occurring, but in the training of students and staff on procedures that we all need to survive an active shooter in our schools.

In the past, schools across the country have implemented a school response system called Lockdown or Code Red. That system is designed that if an unauthorized person enters the school buildings or grounds, a Code Red or Lockdown alert is given and students and staff are instructed to lock their classrooms with the lights out and to hide in a far corner of the classroom, while remaining calm and quiet. This is probably the procedure that you as parents followed some years ago.

History has shown that Lockdown is a tool that we all should use, but is it the only tool at our disposal? The answer to that is evident by the number of students that have been killed or seriously wounded during school shootings. The vulnerabilities of the Lockdown protocol have resulted in students who were shot while hiding under a desk or huddled up in a corner of a classroom, library or cafeteria. Can we expect a fully-armed person that enters our school buildings with the intent to do harm to our children, simply to leave when they find that the classroom door is locked? Knowing what we know about active shooters in school buildings and other public places, the answer is NO. They have already made the decision to inflict harm when they armed themselves and entered that building.

Newton Falls School District, in conjunction with other area schools, is implementing a new procedure that we, as well as experts across the country, believe will increase the chance of survival during an active shooter incident. This new procedure will teach our staff and students the A.L.I.C.E. system. What does this mean? Let me explain:

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| Alert | Get the word out! "Armed intruder in the building, we are in Lockdown" instead of Code Red. We will use clear, concise language to convey the type and location of the event. |
| Lockdown | This is a good starting point. We will continue to lockdown students in a secure area. |

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| Inform | Communication – Give the students and staff real-time information. This helps keep the shooter off-balance and allows for good decision making. |
| Counter | Apply skills to distract, confuse and/or barricade. |
| Evacuate | Decrease the number of potential targets for the shooter and reduce the odds of having victims resulting from friendly fire when help arrives. |

In short, using the A.L.I.C.E. method, we will teach our students and staff that in an event that an armed intruder/active shooter gains access to the building they:

- Listen carefully to the location and type of event.
- Get out and or remain in a secure area until it is safe to evacuate.
- Should an armed intruder/active shooter invade their area, apply skills to distract, confuse and/or barricade.
- As soon as it is safe to do so, evacuate.

I want to assure you that in **NO WAY** are we asking or teaching students and staff to make any attempt to subdue an armed gunman. However, we will provide them with the knowledge that if faced with a life or death situation, there are techniques that can be applied to greatly enhance their chance of survival. The methods that will be taught in the event they are directly confronted by an armed gunman are:

- Cause distractions to interfere with the ability to shoot accurately;
- Cause as much chaos in the room as possible to create sensory overload;
- Do not be a stationary target;
- How to barricade the room;
- How to interact with responding Law Enforcement.

We cordially invite you to an informational parents' night in regards to our upcoming training for our students, which will be led by The Newton Falls Police Department. The meeting will take place at our high school on Wednesday, September 18th, 2013, at 7:00 p.m. Training will emphasize that the best way to survive an active shooter is to escape. When that is not possible, being mentally prepared and having been given the authority and ability to act will save lives.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call me at (330) 872-5445 Ext. 7315. Finally, remember the greatest defense against a threat is information brought to the school by parents and students. If you hear or see anything that seems suspicious, please let us know immediately.

Respectfully,

Paul J. Woodard, Superintendent
Newton Falls Exempted Village Schools

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