**Lockdown Drill-How to Talk to Children Friday Harbor Elementary School**

1. Practicing lockdown drills is in the spirit of ‘Being prepared, Not Scared’. When you’re dealing with something potentially frightening, if you can get ahead of the anxiety, then kids feel more in control. They feel a sense of competence. They know that the teachers have a plan, and the whole thing can make them feel quite safe. Having a plan in place will help the students feel empowered over the situation knowing there is something they can do. They are helping everyone be safe by staying quiet and following their teacher’s directions.

2. You want to be really honest with kids about the low probability that a stranger would come into our school who doesn’t belong here, and who would want to hurt us. But we want to make sure we have a solid plan.

3. The manner or style in which you communicate this is important. You want to do it in an easy manner and talk about it with a lot of confidence and competence. Because kids read the tone of voice, and the emotion in the presentation.

4. You want to communicate that we’re in charge, this is our school, and we want to make sure that only people who belong here are here. Just like we have fire drills, or if there is a snow day we have a plan. If someone who doesn’t belong here is in the building, we have a plan to handle it.

5. Practice helps make doing the most useful and safest thing automatic. Something like this may never happen, but when we’re practiced in protecting ourselves, then we don’t have to worry that we won’t know what to do.

6. Also this kind of drill might even present an opportunity to identify kids who might be more anxious than people know. Ask open-ended questions about what they’re scared about. You want to emphasize the low probability and concrete safety measures that are being taken, that sort of thing.

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**In preparation for a drill, our teachers say to the students:**

*“Every day, we do things to keep ourselves safe. What do you do before walking across the street? It’s like wearing a helmet when we ride our bikes. We wear helmets and knee pads when we skateboard. We don’t expect to fall, but if we do, we’ll be protected. Then we don’t have to worry. We can just ride our bikes and boards and not even think about falling, because we have the situation covered. Being prepared is a ‘just in case’ measure that helps you to feel that you’re safe.”*

*“At school, just like if there is a snow day we have a plan. We also have plans at school to keep us safe. We practice fire drills so we know what to do if the fire alarm rings - we leave the school quickly and quietly going to our lineup place on the field. In earthquake drills, we go under our desks so nothing that falls will hurt us.*

*“Another safety plan we have at school is so we know what to do in case someone came into our school who was so angry or confused they wanted to hurt other people. This would probably never happen, but just like a fire drill, we can practice our response so we are prepared. Our whole school takes part in these drills so we know we are strong and prepared. We can handle this situation by doing what we practiced.”*

*“Today we are going to have a practice lockdown drill. This is only a practice; no one is really at school who is angry or confused. After Mrs. Wehner speaks over the intercom, I will secure the classroom by locking all doors (interior and exterior), covering the windows, turning off lights, and I will tell everyone to be very quiet and get down on the floor away from the windows and door. (Stay out of sight.) It is very important that you be very, very quiet.”*

**FHES Safety Procedures:**

* All exterior doors are locked during school hours
* A security camera at the main entrance
* Deadbolt locks inside every classroom and office door
* Regularly practiced school-wide safety procedures

**Sources:**

Information in this document includes quotes from:

Howard, PhD, J. My School’s New Emergency Plan Includes Lockdown Drills. *The Child Mind Institute*

Prager, PhD, J. S. Talking to Kids About a Lockdown. *Huff Post*. Talking to Kids about School Lockdown Drills. *Hard Talks with Kids*