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Principal: Mary Niesyn

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Dear Reed Families & Caregivers,

In November, the RUSD Strategic Planning Committee (comprised of parents, teachers, staff, administration, and other community members including representatives from local fire and police) met to review the District Safety Plan. One aspect of the meeting included reviewing and providing feedback of site specific safety practices. Some of the feedback for Reed School included a request to share Safety Drill information with families. Specifically, parents and caregivers asked for tips and suggestions about how to speak with their child about safety lockdown drills. Parents and caregivers also requested advance notice of lockdown drills. Please take time to review the information below. In addition to addressing the request for information regarding lockdown drills, I included information for all safety drills at Reed.

Sincerely,
Mary Niesyn

** Please note that all lockdown drills were suspended between March 2020 - January 2022 due to Covid. Reed School will have a practice lockdown drill in mid-February (exact date TBD). Please read below for details.*

SAFETY DRILLS AT REED

What type of drills do students and staff practice? Throughout the year, Reed students participate in a range of required safety drills. These include monthly fire drills, quarterly earthquake drills, and once a semester indoor lockdown drills. Please know that Reed staff regularly reviews and discusses best practices regarding safety drills. When communicating to students, teachers and staff use a simple and consistent message of safety. Teachers explain to students that sometimes we practice exiting a classroom and lining up on the playground, sometimes we practice "turtle" position (earthquake), and sometimes we practice remaining indoors. Please take comfort in knowing that Reed staff does an excellent job framing every drill as a "whole school practice of safety."



Fire Drills: Once a month the fire alarm is sounded and all students and staff practice walking quietly to their designated spot on the playground. Attendance is taken to ensure that every member of our school community is accounted for and is safe. Reed students consistently do an excellent job during our practice drills. Parents and caregivers are notified by email after each drill.

Earthquake Drills: Once a quarter Reed students and staff practice getting into “turtle position” for an earthquake drill. The announcement is made using the schoolwide PA system. Students practice protecting their body while remaining calm and quiet. A second PA announcement signifies the end of the practice drill and students are praised for their efforts. Parents and caregivers are notified by email after each drill.

Lockdown Drills: Once each semester, students and staff practice a non-sensorial lockdown drill. The purpose of this drill is to keep students, staff, and visitors safe from any danger outside of the building. During the drill all doors throughout the school are locked and window blinds are closed. Teachers direct students to a specific location in the classroom. Attendance is sent to the front office via text and email. Students and staff practice remaining quiet until a PA announcement is made ending the drill. Once again, students are reassured of their safety and they are praised for their efforts. Parents and caregivers are (will be) notified by email after each drill.

I remember practicing fire and earthquake drills, but lockdown drills sound scary. What does the research say? We do realize that the term(s) lock the doors or lockdown can sound alarming and parents are wise to ask about current research. Below is an excerpt from the National Association of School Psychologists regarding non-sensorial lockdown drills. In the [full pdf](#), you can find a description and discussion of a range of approaches. At Reed School we utilize a non-sensorial lockdown approach.

What does the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) say about lockdown drills?

Excerpt from the NASP: DRILL APPROACHES AND PLANNING

A. Lockdown Versus Options-Based and Live Simulation Drills

Lockdown drills have been conducted for decades, do not involve play acting or sensorial components, and have been documented to be effective. They are an essential part of school safety preparedness. When done appropriately, they align with fire or dangerous weather drills in how they are conducted and should not elevate anxiety. Specifically, lockdown drills involve locking the door to secure the space, moving students out of sight, and requiring students to

remain quiet within the room. In practice, lockdowns have a well-established history of keeping students and school staff members safe when presented with real threats of harm. These drills are intended to teach and practice basic skills regardless of the specific imminent threat, starting with following the instructions of the trusted adult in charge. All participants should know ahead of time that the drill will take place and what to expect, including what announcement will be made or what bell will sound to start the drill. It is recommended that parental caregivers be notified before lockdown drills. Additionally, caregivers should be offered the opportunity for their child to receive alternate teaching and training if they feel it necessary for their child's well-being. For example, if a child, group of children, or school community has experienced trauma due to school violence, alternate teaching and training may be necessary to avoid further trauma exposure. While schools may call this an "opt-out" policy, it is important to clarify that this option should not be regarded as an exemption from safety preparation, but rather an opportunity for appropriate substitute activities. Emergency responders and law enforcement (other than the SROs) are not typically part of the on-campus drill, but they may be invited to observe the drill depending on state laws. These drills are appropriate for most students and staff members when done properly. However, attention should always be paid to students who might present specific vulnerabilities, such as those with previous trauma history or disabilities.

How can I support my child? Should we talk about drills in advance?

This is a common question with no one-size-fits all answer. The truth is, you know your child best. At Reed, we have found that most children do not experience undue stress or anxiety when practicing safety drills. That said, you may want to review the suggestions below if you feel your child may benefit from a conversation with you.

Before a Drill - Set the Tone:

- Prepare your children by setting expectations. You know your child best and your guidance will help them. Let them know that school is a safe place and that part of the job of teachers and school staff is to practice safety skills. "Just like you practice fire drills at school, you also practice lockdown drills so that you know exactly what to do to stay safe in an emergency."
- Make connections to safety habits you already practice. Explain that the lockdown drill is another safety habit just like the many safety habits you do on a regular basis, for example, wearing seatbelts and bike helmets. Though it may be new to your child, the lockdown drill will be best learned through practicing.
- Follow your child's lead. If they seem worried or uncomfortable, help them to identify their feelings and talk with them about ways of handling them. For example, taking a few deep breaths, reminding themselves the drill will end soon, asking the teacher for help or staying close to a friend.

- Consider your child's unique needs. If you are concerned about how your child will handle the lockdown drill, reach out to the school and partner with your child's teacher to address your concerns.

During a Drill - Communication:

- You will receive notification from Reed shortly after the drill so that you know when it has happened.

After a Drill - Check in/ Follow your child's lead:

- Let your child know the school made you aware that there was a lockdown drill that day. Children feel safer when they know that families and schools are working together.
- Ask if they would like to talk about it and let their comments guide you. Children process events in many ways. Some children would prefer not to talk about it, which is okay, too. Some children may simply want to spend some time together in a shared activity with few words. Young children often process through their play.
- If they share that they felt okay about the drill, reinforce that the purpose of the drill is to keep them safe by knowing what to do.
- If they share that they felt scared, sad, or nervous, acknowledge the feeling while directing the student toward positive coping skills. "Yes, sometimes we all have scary feelings. What helps you to feel safer when you are scared?" Some things that may help them feel safer might include knowing their teacher is there with them; knowing they have responded in a way that will keep them safe. You can also share a time when you felt scared and what helped you get through it.

When do the drills take place? As stated above, fire drills are required on a monthly basis, earthquake drills on a quarterly basis, and lockdown drills are once a semester. Teachers proactively communicate upcoming drills with students, however the specific time of the drill is not shared in advance. This is an important aspect of learning how to respond to a signal in a variety of settings at various times throughout a school day. Parents and caregivers will receive an email shortly after each drill.

Additional Resources:

[NASP: Mitigating Psychological Effects of Lockdowns](#)

[NASP: Talking to Children About Violence Tips for Parents & Teachers](#)

[How to Prepare Your Child With Special Needs for a Lockdown Drill](#)

