

What to Do When There Is an Emergency at School!

A Story for Preparing Children in Schools
for Emergencies and Drills

by

Peter Dolan



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Dedication

To all of the people who work hard every day to help prevent, respond, and restore a school community after a school incident. Whether you are in public safety or education, your planning, training, drilling, and revising is never finished and is truly difficult work. To those who serve on NEMLEC STARS, you truly are gifted and special people. What you have done and are always ready to do to help schools deal with emergency situations is inspiring to me. THANK YOU!

To all those who work in schools, you are the true “first responders.” I find it so humbling that you are willing to sacrifice your life for others, especially for our children. This is an incredible attribute. You are HEROES, and none of us would be who we have become without you all. This includes, but is not limited to, principals, assistant principals, curriculum specialists, teachers, administrative assistants, paraprofessionals, nurses, social workers, guidance, cafeteria staff, maintenance staff, bus drivers, and the list goes on and on.... THANK YOU TO ALL OF YOU!

This book would not be possible without the contributions, edits, and support from, Lt. Scott Sencabaugh, Kristin Kirby, Carol Mitchell, Michelle Post, Kathleen Coye, Laura Degelmann, and Susan Terban. I also need to thank my family for their support and love. My wife Erin (who designed the cover), and my daughters Kyla and Kira. My wife is an educator and my children are elementary school students. It is them, and my own students, I had in mind when I came up with the idea to help students and teachers talk about school safety in the classroom. I hope this book helps to reduce the anxieties and fears of both parties and helps to make us all a little safer.

Welcome to a unique and comprehensive social story on school safety. This particular story is to be used in the classroom setting for students in preschool through second grade. The book is also used with our sub-separate special education classrooms throughout the district. The book was originally written to be used with the Malden Public Schools in Malden, Massachusetts. It is now being used in many districts across the state and country.

Teachers should help educate their students on what is to be done in an emergency. This story is to be used in place of the traditional assembly to deliver this important information that the students need to know in case of an emergency. The students using this social story are less likely to understand emergency information explained in a traditional assembly. A more intimate setting, with teachers who understand how to explain complex information, is a better way to approach this sensitive and important topic. The students also feel safer with their classroom teacher and will handle the delivery of a sensitive topic such as this a lot easier and with less anxiety.

Some background information and further education on certain vocabulary words may be needed. Members of your school's Safety Response Team are available to help you deliver these messages if you feel you need additional assistance when reading this story. The most important thing to do is to remain calm and reassuring. Your students will be looking for your reaction and will mirror how you handle yourself discussing the story, practicing a drill, and during an actual

emergency. Your students may be nervous or sensitive at first, but in time they will become used to the information and the drills that will follow. If we didn't educate the students now, the amount of panic and confusion in the event of a real emergency would or could be catastrophic. You should read and review this story several times during the year, as a drill or event may occur at any time and students need to remember what to do.

This story has been reviewed and edited by over one hundred twenty educational professionals. These professionals include school psychologists, adolescent psychiatrists, social workers, guidance counselors, law enforcement, fire professionals, team chairs, special-education directors, principals, assistant principals, teachers, and early-childhood professionals. I especially would like to thank those from NEMLEC STARS, and the Malden, Wilmington, and Andover Public Schools that have helped make important changes to this book. We hope that you find this story to be helpful to both you and your students in this vital area of school emergency preparations. We also understand your hesitations, concerns, and differences of opinions on even discussing this information with certain members of our student population. We believe this topic is too important and that all students should be prepared for emergency situations. Good luck and be safe!



Everyone who works in schools wants children to be safe and happy at school. Teachers tell us what to do when we are in our classroom, in the cafeteria, in the bathroom, and playing outside. Teachers also help us practice what to do if there is an emergency at school. This is called a drill. It is important to listen to the teacher all the time.



Sometimes we have emergency drills at school.

These can be fire drills, bus evacuation drills, shelter-in-place, evacuation, and lock-down drills. We don't always know when drills will happen. We practice drills to stay safe. Drills will only last a short time. Usually, it is NOT a real emergency.

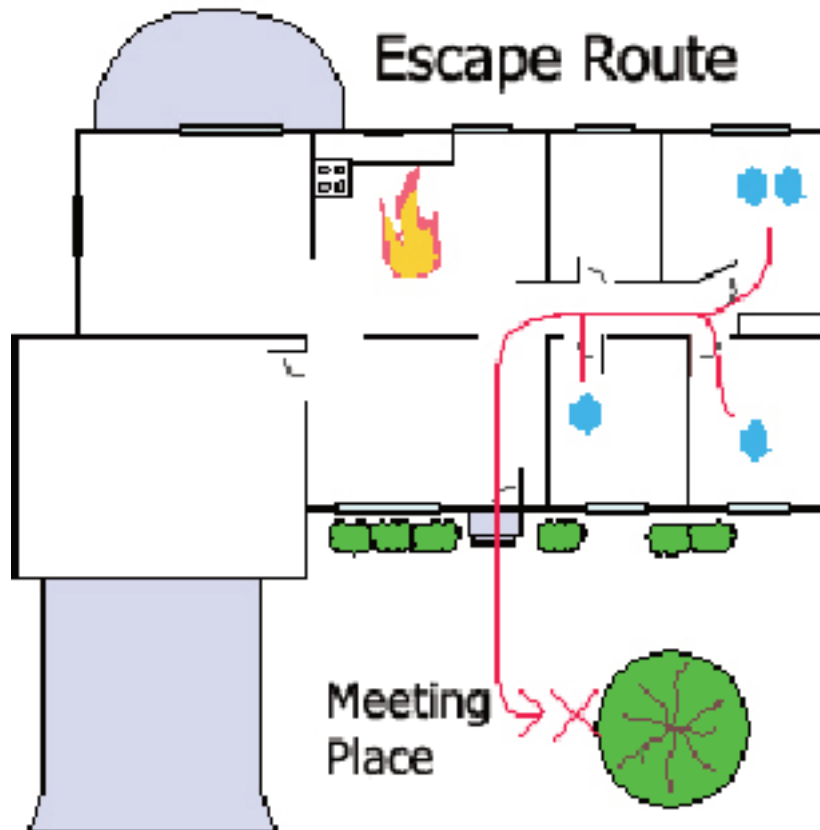


First, we may hear a loud alarm and/or an announcement. We must **STOP** and **LISTEN**. The teacher will say, "Please listen. There is an emergency." There may be an announcement that an intruder has entered the school. Sometimes the announcement will say the words "lock down," "evacuate," or "shelter-in-place." Other times, we may not leave the classroom if we hear the alarm.



The teacher may tell us to sit very quietly in the back of the classroom and spread out in different spots. We need to stay away from the door.

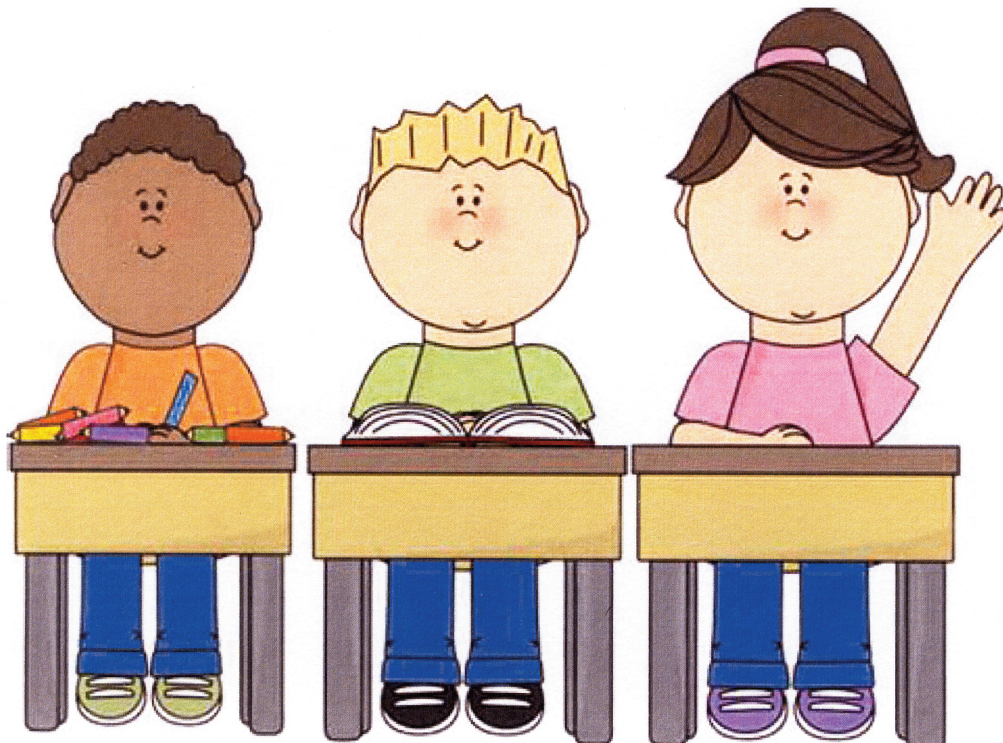
My teacher may have to turn off all the lights and block the door. This is called “bar-ricading the door.” It may be very dark. It is important to sit very quietly and wait. This is called a “lock down.”



Sometimes the teacher may tell us to stand up in the dark classroom and run outside to our meeting place. This is called an “evacuation.”



The teacher may tell all of us to stand in line and be very quiet. We may have to go to a different part of the school. We may have to walk outside and go to our special meeting place. This is also called an "evacuation."



Sometimes we may "shelter-in-place". We will continue our normal school day but not be able to go outside. Or we may have to sit quietly in the hallway for an environmental emergency.



School Rules!

If I am alone in the hallway or in the bathroom and I hear an intruder, emergency announcement, or alarm, what should I do?

Fire alarm = Go to our meeting place outside

Shelter-in-place = Go to the principal's office

Lock down / Barricade = Listen to the announcement and go to our meeting place outside if threat is inside, or the main office if the threat is outside. The bathroom is also a place to hide.

Evacuate = Go to our meeting place outside



During an emergency, police officers may come into school. Police officers help everyone stay safe. Students and teachers must always listen to police officers. They help everyone when there is an emergency.



During an emergency, firefighters may come into the school. Firefighters help everyone stay safe. Students and teachers must always listen to firefighters. They help everyone when there is an emergency.



We must always listen to the teacher and do what the teacher tells us to do. In some emergencies, we may get on a bus or walk to a different place with a teacher to meet our parents. This is called a reunification site.



All schools practice emergency drills so that we are safe and happy every day at school. We will continue to practice drills and emergency situations.

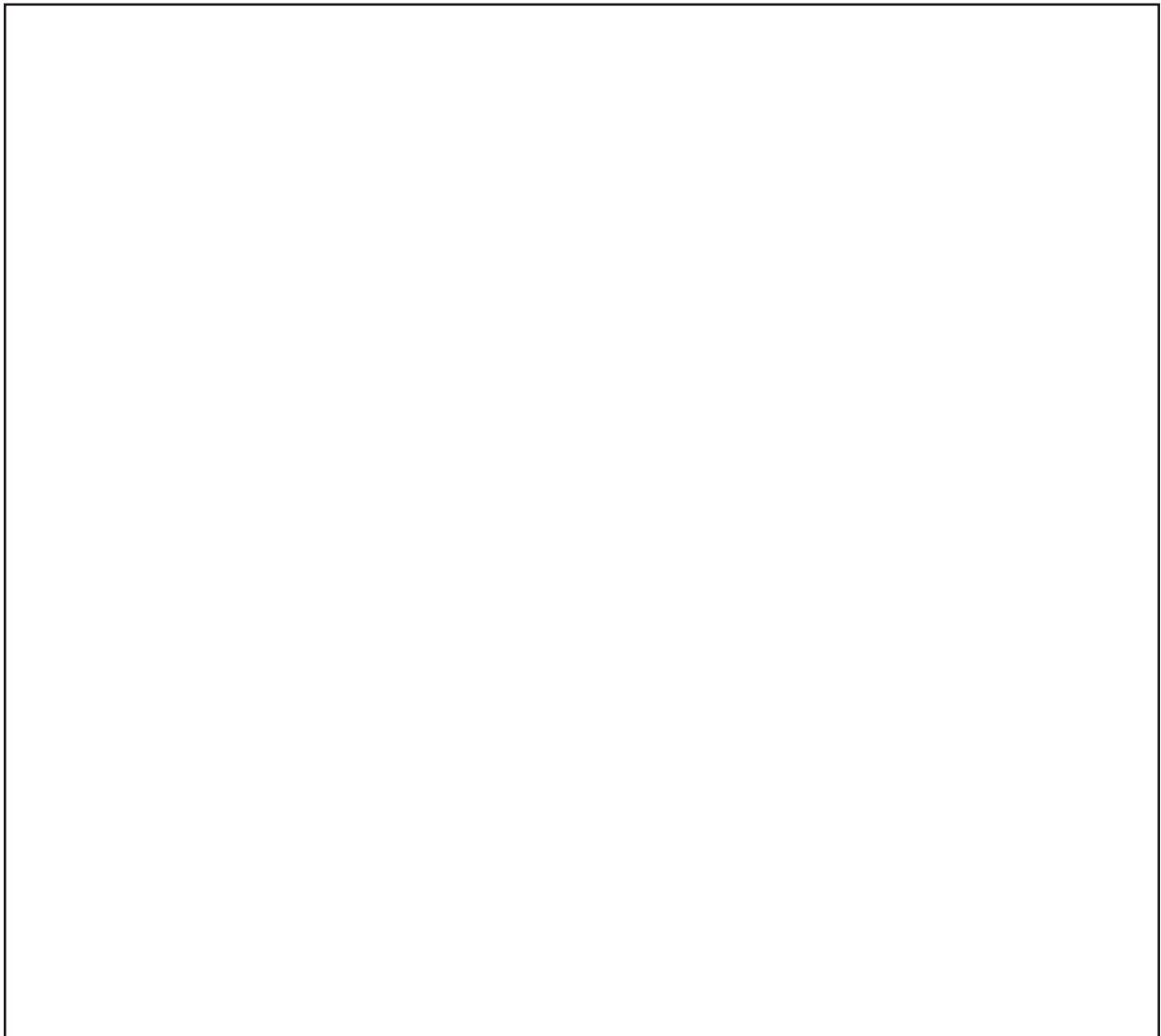
Including fire drill, shelter-in-place, and lock down, which will include (barricade) pushing our desks and other things in front of our door.

We will also practice escaping from the classroom and quickly moving outside to our meeting place (evacuation).

We like being safe at school.

We now know what to do
when there is an emergency at school.

Activity Lesson: Please draw a picture of
yourself being safe in school. Take the picture
home and talk to your family about what you
have learned today in school to help keep you
safe.



“What to do if there is an Emergency at School!” Lesson Plan

Essential Questions students should be able to answer after the lesson:

- What are ways I can be a good citizen during a school emergency?
- Who are the helpers during a school emergency?
- What does it mean to be a good listener?
- Why is being a good listener important?
- What do I need to do in an emergency?

Common Core Standards addressed by this lesson:

Kindergarten:

- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.K.1a](#): Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., listening to others and taking turns speaking about the topics and texts under discussion).
- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.K.3](#): Ask and answer questions in order to seek help, get information, or clarify something that is not understood.
- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.K.5c](#): Identify real-life connections between words and their use.

First Grade:

- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.1.1a](#): Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., listening to others with care and speaking one at a time about the topics and texts under discussion).
- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.1.3](#): Ask and answer questions about what a speaker says in order to gather additional information or clarify something that is not understood.
- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.1.5c](#): Identify real-life connections between words and their use.

Second Grade:

- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.2.1a](#): Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., gaining the floor in respectful ways, listening to others with care, and speaking one at a time about the topics and texts under discussion).
- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.2.3](#): Ask and answer questions about what a speaker says in order to clarify comprehension, gather additional information, or deepen understanding of a topic or issue.
- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.2.5a](#): Identify real-life connections between words and their use.

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- Exhibit an understanding of actions to take during a school emergency, Emergency, such as being a good listener, focusing on the teacher's directions, remaining calm and in control, doing what adults say without questions.

Lesson:

Introduction/Pre-Reading, to build and open up background knowledge

- It may be helpful to open up this lesson by discussing how important it is to be a good listener. Providing children a chance to thoroughly understand the significance of listening skills in various situations will lead into the importance of listening to one's teacher during times of emergency.
- The following **vocabulary** words may be unfamiliar to many younger students: drills, emergency, escape route, exit, intruder, environmental emergency, lock down, evacuation, shelter-in-place, barricade, and meeting place. To ensure a more valuable lesson and understanding of *What to Do When There Is an Emergency at School!* it is recommended to discuss these words before reading the book.

- Beginning readers can learn to visually recognize these words as well as tell the meaning.
- Offer the words for spelling extra credit for students at a level using spelling tests.
- The provided top-down web can be adapted however you feel works best for your students. Included are key terms and categories that are important to discuss before reading *What to Do When There Is an Emergency at School!*
- Show the students where the class reunification area is. Remember to inform students that you may tell them to go to your “meeting place” ahead of you or without you. Reassure the students that someone will be there to help them.
- If the student is outside of the classroom and an emergency announcement happens, they should be told, during the reading of the story, how to respond depending on the situation. Spend a good amount of time on this, discussing and building their confidence. Remind them they can learn the instructions and be able to make good decisions if they have to think on their own.

- After reading this story, tell the students that the entire school family will be practicing the drills that are being discussed within the story. The lock down, barricade, evacuation, and shelter-in-place drills will first be done with the classroom teacher and then as a school. Prepare the students for the announcements that will happen and inform them they will be practicing announced and unannounced drills.

Base of Lesson:

- Read aloud *What to Do When There Is an Emergency at School!*

Post-Read Aloud:

- Connect good listening skills to the read aloud by asking students the five essential questions from the beginning of the lesson plan. Praise those that grasped the concepts; remind yourself that there will be more training and practice that will enable the others to grasp the concepts eventually.
- Re-discuss importance of helpers and how “we” can help by following our teachers’ directions.

- Read the book periodically throughout the year to remind students of what to do in an emergency.
- Tell the students that the entire school family will be practicing the drills that are being discussed within the story. That drills will happen several times during the year and to be prepared.
- Have students draw a picture of how they will be safe in school and explain it to the class.

Emergencies

