



From the Mr. T Files:

October 29, 2015

PRACTICE LOCKDOWN AND VISITING OUR BUILDING

Wednesday morning, Columbus Magnet held their first lockdown drill for the school year. Prior to having our drill, I invited Bob Killackey, the district's school preparedness coordinator, and our SRO, Officer Chris Holms, to come to the school and observe the process. I wanted to make sure we executed the drill with precision, and also discover potential issues that could be unearthed during the practice. Mr. Killackey came to our faculty meeting on Monday, and presented a very comprehensive safety talk with the staff. The conversation was eye opening because we walked away with very practical solutions on how to respond to a potential crisis. Before the drill, teachers prepared the students for what would happen. We wanted to alleviate any stress and fears caused by practicing a lockdown. Officer Holms invited a colleague, a member of the Norwalk PD SWAT Team, to observe as well.

At 9:15, I prepped the children via loudspeaker, detailing what would happen, and I emphasized the word, "PRACTICE." Minutes later, I announced we would begin our practice. Along with Mrs. Scanlan, we walked through the entire building, making sure doors were locked and children and teachers were not seen or heard as we peered through the glass. You could hear a pin drop in the entire building. The drill was a success. The children were excellent. I owe a debt of gratitude to our teachers and assistants for following through, and kudos to our district for relying upon Mr. Killackey's skills and expertise.

Because of the practice, and the ensuing debrief session afterwards, we discovered an issue we probably would not have thought about when prepping for a drill:

THE PARENT. What happens if you are in the building and we are in lockdown?

- A.** When you enter the building, make sure you sign in and out in the front office. In the event of an emergency, there is a record of occupants in the building. Law enforcement needs this information.
- B.** You must always have a visitor's sticker. Always. The superintendent of schools is in charge of the entire district, yet, when he comes to Columbus Magnet, he knows to sign in and wear his sticker.
- C.** If you are in the hallway, and you hear, "Lockdown," follow everyone else's lead. Get into a classroom and do what the kids do. If the classrooms are locked, get to a bathroom, close the door, and hide in a stall. If you are near an exit, run outside, away from the threat. Please do not think you are going to search for your child in an emergency. Resist the urge because reckless actions will put you and others in harm's way.
- D.** Never prop a door open. Doors remain locked all the time.

E. If you see something, say something.

Aside from a lockdown, I want to share this final point with you. We are a welcoming community, and we appreciate parent support and involvement. However, DO NOT POP INTO YOUR CHILD'S CLASSROOM. Even if you are already in the building, please do not walk into your child's classroom, unless you have an appointment, or if it is a time your child's teacher has deemed, "Open Hour."

The last point might be a departure from past practice. As a former classroom teacher, there was never anything more frustrating than being in the middle of a very intense group discussion with my class, or working through a difficult concept requiring the utmost focus and concentration, and in comes a parent wanting a quick hug from their baby, or wanting a quick second of my time. Three seconds throws off lots of work and energy. I am not anti-parent, but I am pro-your child.

Everything I just wrote is to ensure that your child's day is orderly, and their learning time is sacred. Structure ensures safety.

As always, thank you for taking the time to read and understand. Not only do I speak as your child's principal, but as a daddy of three. Feel free to reach out to me when necessary.

Now, please excuse me as I head home to mediate a battle between my wife and know-it-all 5th grader over his school project.

Fondly,
Mr. T