



January 22, 2019

Staff at South Williamsport Area School District Practice ALICE Training

Barricading classroom doors was the focus for all South Williamsport Area School District staff on Monday during their annual ALICE active shooter training. Members of the South Williamsport Area Police Department lead the one-hour practice sessions to prepare staff for a lockdown drill later this week which students will participate in.

ALICE stands for Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter and Evacuate. Each area is a means of survival if there is an active shooter. The main purpose for Monday's exercise was to concentrate on the lockdown aspect which involves barricading doors with whatever objects are around.

Superintendent Dr. Mark Stamm said doing this training regularly is essential in helping staff and students overcome their fears in order to respond effectively in an emergency. The skills can be used outside the classroom too.

"The skills taught in the ALICE training program are portable," he said. "Everyone who is trained can use these tools anywhere in the community."

The drill began at Central Elementary School where four groups split up into different classrooms with the intention of using whatever necessary to prevent the police officers from getting inside the rooms.

During last year's orientation to the program, they learned how to properly barricade a door using desks, tables, chairs, shelves as well as everyday items such as belts and extension cords to prevent an intruder from coming in.

Mrs. Christine Miller, kindergarten teacher, said she felt more confident doing the training since it was her second time using the barricade technique. During the practice there was a room full of adults but during the lockdown drill later this week, it will be her and over 20 kindergarteners.

"It'll be different with my students here," she said. "I won't just be worried about the door, my main concern will be the children."

To help her students not be so scared, she plans to explain that this is just like the other drills they practice for fires and tornados.



Rommelt Elementary School staff worked together to barricade a classroom door using heavy tables and metal stools during an ALICE training on Monday. Together they prevented South Williamsport Area Police from entering the room.

Down the street at Rommelt Elementary School, School Resource Officer Mike Samar and Cpl. Carl Finnerty discussed that the building's main challenge is that all the classrooms are on the second floor.

"If there is a lower roof or sturdy awning, you can carefully drop the students out of the window," Cpl. Finnerty said. He explained that in a life or death situation, that could potentially be a better option.

During one of the lockdown sessions, Cpl. Finnerty opened the door to one of the classrooms. He shined a flashlight through the crevasses between the desks and chairs but could not get through the actual barricade.

Experiencing this gave Mrs. Jodi Puller, fifth grade English and Social Studies teacher, a new perspective on how someone can cause harm without physically entering her classroom.

"It just takes an open door," she said. "An active shooter doesn't have to be in the room to shoot."

At the high school, multiple teachers took last year's instruction to heart and brought in ropes to help keep their classroom doors shut in case of an emergency.

Eighth grade math teacher Mrs. Hilarie German and her husband Mr. Mark German made ropes with hooks that were tailored specifically for their classrooms. One end ties on to the doorknob then the other end latches on to a heating grate on the wall.

Mrs. German said it worked perfectly during the drill. She plans to use it again during the lockdown with her well-prepared students.

"We have practiced barricading as an eighth-grade team," she said. "The students handled it well because they understand the reason for these drills."

During her and her students' debriefing session, she said they asked insightful questions which showed that they see the importance in practicing ALICE.

At the school board meeting Monday evening, board member Nathan Miller made a motion to purchase additional door locking devices for all classroom doors. Dr. Stamm explained that several different devices were reviewed with the district safety committee. The board approved the motion and the devices will be installed beginning in mid-February.

To learn more about the ALICE training, please visit www.alicetraining.com.