

Is Your Child's School Prepared?

8 Questions Parents Can Ask to Assess School Safety

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The safety of children at school is a primary concern of parents and communities. In light of man-made and natural threats to school safety, parents naturally want to be reassured that children are safe and secure when in the care of the school. Unfortunately, for many parents not knowing what to ask is a barrier to getting the answers needed for that reassurance. The following is a list of basic questions that can be asked by parents to determine if the school takes a proactive approach to school safety.

1

Does our school have a written emergency plan? And if so, when was the last time it was updated?

Every school should have a written plan in place that is reviewed and updated at a minimum of once per year.

2

Does our school have a "Safety Team" that monitors school safety and is prepared to implement the plan? How often do they meet?

Proactive schools have a team of staff members who meet regularly to evaluate the status of safety in the school.

3

Are practice drills scheduled regularly to test emergency procedures?

Many states mandate that certain drills be conducted on a regular basis throughout the year. Regardless, drills should be practiced to test procedures and to help students and staff react with confidence in the event of an emergency.

4

Does the school district have school safety and security policies? Where can I find those policies?

Sometimes a simple search of the district website will answer this question, but school personnel should be aware and capable of pointing you to those policies.

5

Does our school have a reunification plan? Is it practiced? How are parents informed of our responsibilities in the implementation of that plan?

Following an emergency requiring school closure or evacuation, safety minded schools have thought through how to reunite children with families in a secure and orderly manner.

6

In our school, are all staff including substitutes trained to implement the emergency plan?

A plan is only as good as the confidence of the people responsible for carrying out the plan. Training and practicing plan implementation is essential.

7

In the event of an emergency, how will our school district communicate with parents?

Every good emergency plan has a focus on internal and external communication. Having a variety of communication tools such as text messaging, auto dialers, social media, etc. is helpful in reaching all parents quickly to communicate facts and directives.

8

How can I help?

Many proactive schools are adopting a collaborative approach to school safety, involving parent representatives and support to make the most of available resources and gain community support for school safety initiatives.

It is important parents keep in mind some pieces of an emergency plan are confidential and may not be able to be shared. However, asking these questions will give you a good sense of the level of preparedness of your child's school and help you find a way to help support and protect the safety of your child's school.

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