

10 THINGS SCHOOLS SHOULD CONSIDER WHEN CREATING CLASSROOM DRILLS FOR STUDENTS

Interactive classroom drills and scenarios that help students think, decide, and respond.





Classroom Drills for Students

Most school incidents involve students. Yet training typically focuses on adults.

Students don't need to be emergency experts, but they do need to recognize when something is wrong, make appropriate decisions, communicate, follow instructions, and seek help when needed.

Schools conduct live drills. Why not use drills and roleplay practice to expand student readiness? Classroom exercises provide a safe environment to practice skills and explore a wide range of scenarios without the burden of school-wide scheduling and academic disruption.

The goal should be to help students feel prepared enough that they know what to do when something unexpected happens.

Practice what you'll do. Do what you practice.

Ten considerations. One clear goal.

Below are the ten topics we'll explore in greater depth:

1 Age appropriate

6 Communication

2 Confidence - not fear

7 Permission to speak up

3 Everyday incidents

8 Decision making

4 ASK, SAY, and DO

9 Debrief

5 Feel real

10 Small, safe doses

A SIMPLE STUDENT RESPONSE FRAMEWORK

A ASK

I don't know what to do.

S SAY

Something doesn't look right.

D DO

I know what I'm supposed to do.

1

START WITH DEVELOPMENT

Make Every Exercise Age Appropriate

A classroom drill for a third grader should look very different from one designed for a high school senior.

Younger students may need simple questions: "What would you do?" "Who would you tell?" "Which adult could help you?"

Older students can work through more complicated situations involving communication, changing circumstances, conflicting information, or helping classmates.

The decisions also change with age. Middle and high schools have open lunch and hallway schedules, whereas grade school students are always supervised.

Districts should consider developmental maturity when determining the scenario, language, length, complexity, and expected student response.

Preparedness should grow with the student.

2

DESIGN FOR CAPABILITY

Build Confidence - Not Fear

Preparedness training should leave students feeling more confident, not more afraid.

Scenarios should focus on actions students can take rather than dramatic descriptions of what could happen.

Instead of concentrating on the threat, concentrate on the decision: Where should you go? Who should you tell? What information is important? What should you do next?

Students should finish an exercise thinking: "I know what I can do." Not: "I'm scared this is going to happen."

Focus on what students can do next.

3

BUILD THE HABIT

Practice Everyday Incidents - Not Just Major Emergencies

Student preparedness shouldn't be relegated to fires, severe weather, and lockdowns.

Hundreds of situations happen every year where students need to make good decisions.

- A student becomes sick during lunch.
- Someone gets hurt during gym.
- A classmate has an allergic reaction.
- A student becomes separated from the group during a field trip.
- A stranger is somewhere they shouldn't be.
- A student smells smoke in a bathroom.
- Someone makes a concerning comment online.
- A friend appears to need help.

Practicing everyday situations helps students develop the decision-making habits they may eventually need during a more serious incident.

Everyday practice builds transferable decision-making habits.



BROADEN THE SCENARIO

Medical events

Trips and transitions

Facilities and hazards

Online concerns

Helping a classmate

4

GIVE STUDENTS A SIMPLE FRAMEWORK

Teach Students to Ask, Say, and Do

Students should understand that responding to an incident often begins with three simple concepts:

ASK - "I don't know what to do." Students should feel comfortable asking a teacher or trusted adult for guidance when they are uncertain.

SAY - "Something doesn't look right." Students should know how and when to report something concerning - even when they aren't completely sure it's an emergency.

DO - "I know what I'm supposed to do." When an incident requires immediate action, students should understand how to follow instructions and established school procedures.

Students don't need to diagnose the emergency.

They need to recognize when something requires attention and know what to do next.



THREE MOVES

ASK when uncertain.

SAY when something seems wrong.

DO what the procedure requires.

5

USE FAMILIAR SETTINGS

Make Scenarios Feel Real to Students

Generic scenarios create generic responses.

Use situations students experience.

Instead of: "There is an emergency somewhere in the school."

Try: "You're walking back from lunch and notice water pouring from the ceiling near the science hallway. No teacher is nearby. What would you do?"

Use familiar environments: Classrooms. Hallways. Cafeterias. Buses. Athletic fields. Locker rooms. Auditoriums. Playgrounds. Field trips. After-school activities.

Students engage differently when they can picture themselves in the situation.

6

ROUTE INFORMATION WELL

Practice Communication - Including What NOT to Do

Students live in an environment where information moves instantly. During an incident, that creates opportunities and challenges.

Classroom drills should teach students how to determine: Who needs to know? What information should I share? How do I explain what I saw? Should I call, text, report, or tell an adult?

Students should also understand why posting rumors, photos, videos, locations, or unverified information on social media during an emergency can create additional problems.

Good communication isn't simply communicating quickly. It's getting useful information to the right people.

7

MAKE REPORTING NORMAL

Give Students Permission to Speak Up

One of the most important preparedness skills students can develop is understanding that it's okay to say something.

Students frequently notice things adults don't. They hear conversations. They see social media posts. They notice changes in classmates. They recognize people who don't belong. They see hazards in hallways, classrooms, locker rooms, buses, and athletic facilities.

Classroom drills should reinforce a simple message: If something doesn't seem right, tell someone.

Students should never feel that they need absolute certainty before bringing a concern to an adult.

If something doesn't seem right, tell someone.

8

PREPARE FOR CHANGING CIRCUMSTANCES

Teach Decision Making - Not Just Directions

Students frequently hear: "Follow your teacher's instructions." That's important. But what happens when the teacher isn't there?

A student might be in the bathroom, walking between classes, outside at recess, at an athletic practice, riding the bus, or at an away game or field trip.

Drills allow students to think through those situations before experiencing them.

Ask questions rather than simply providing answers: What would you do first? What information would you need? Who could help you? What if that person wasn't available?

Preparedness means understanding procedures while developing confidence to make appropriate decisions when circumstances change.

9

LEARN FROM STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

Debrief Every Student Exercise

The exercise shouldn't end when the scenario ends. Ask students:

- What was your first instinct?
- What was confusing?
- What information did you wish you had?
- What would you do differently?
- What could adults have done to make your decision easier?

Student responses can uncover preparedness gaps that administrators and faculty may never see.

- A confusing announcement.
- A door students don't know how to access.
- An unclear meeting location.
- A procedure students don't understand.
- A communication method students don't use.

Sometimes students can tell you more about whether an emergency plan will actually work than the plan itself can.



LISTEN FOR GAPS

Student feedback reveals how plans feel in practice.

Debriefs turn an exercise into organizational learning.

10

NORMALIZE PREPAREDNESS

Practice Frequently in Small, Safe Doses

Student preparedness doesn't have to mean another hour-long schoolwide drill.

Five or ten minutes can be enough.

- Present a scenario during homeroom.
- Ask a preparedness question during advisory.
- Run a short discussion before a field trip.
- Practice a scenario with a sports team.
- Include a quick preparedness conversation during an assembly.
- Change one variable and discuss the scenario again.

Short, regular exercises can make preparedness part of school culture rather than something students experience only during mandatory drills.

Preparedness should feel normal - not frightening.



SMALL-DOSE CADENCE

5-10 minutes

Homeroom or advisory

Before trips and activities

One changed variable

Confidence is the outcome.

The purpose of student preparedness isn't to turn children into first responders.

It's to help them become confident participants in their own safety and the safety of their school community.

Students should know how to recognize when something isn't right, communicate what they know, find a trusted adult, follow instructions, and make appropriate decisions when circumstances change.

Sometimes it's a major emergency. More often, it's an everyday situation - an injured classmate, a missing student, an unsafe condition, a suspicious visitor, a medical emergency, or something that simply doesn't look right.

The districts that prepare students create a culture where students can confidently say:



I know who to ask.



I know when to say something.



I know what to do.



Preparedness starts before the moment that matters.

ABOUT RESPONDR

Respondr is an AI-assisted scenario-building application that helps organizations prepare their people for incidents both big and small.

Respondr enables schools, businesses, and organizations to quickly create realistic, customized training scenarios that help faculty, students, employees, volunteers, and staff practice decision-making, communication, and response - building the confidence to know what to do when it matters most.

RESPONDR

Practice what you'll do. Do what you practice.

BUILD CONFIDENCE THROUGH PRACTICE

AI-ASSISTED SCENARIO BUILDING