



AMERICAN HERITAGE SCHOOL LOCKDOWN DRILL INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

Dear Parents,

This coming Monday, March 20, at 8:45 a.m., we will be holding the school's first K–12 lockdown drill. We want you as parents to have all the information you need in advance so that you will understand why we are holding a schoolwide lockdown drill, what we will (and won't) be rehearsing and discussing with students, and how AHS faculty and staff are trained. If after reading this information you would prefer that one or more of your children not participate, please feel free to speak with administration or keep your child(ren) home during the drill, which should last approximately one-hour, including classroom discussion with law enforcement, concluding sometime between 9:30 and 10 a.m.

Why are we holding a K-12 lockdown drill? Our goal is to train students in this important safety protocol so that they respond as instinctively and as calmly as possible in the unlikely event of a lockdown emergency. This is part of our general safety training plan, and not a response to a specific threat. Another equally important goal is to convey a sense of safety, peace, and calm to the students even as we are training them on emergency response procedures. The Utah State Fire Marshall requires monthly fire drills in elementary schools, including at AHS. However, as frequently as schools conduct fire drills in Utah and throughout the United States, the number of school injuries and fatalities due to fire unfortunately pales in comparison to the [growing list](#) of injuries and fatalities that have resulted from school shootings. Two of the most recent school shootings have been on the Wasatch Front. AFD shared with us a [time-lapse video map](#) showing the increase in frequency of active shooter events in the United States from 2000–2015. American Heritage School's Safety & Security Committee, in coordination with our security personnel and the American Fork Police Department, conducted lockdown drills last year, first with faculty on a K-12 inservice day, and then with students in grades 7–12 on a K–6 inservice day when elementary students were not present. Those drills were successful and provided important training and feedback. After careful consideration with our Safety & Security Committee, we decided last year that we would join other private and public schools in Utah (and across the country) who annually rehearse their lockdown procedures not just with faculty, but with all students, including elementary students.

What will be rehearsed during the lockdown drill? This is a lockdown process drill. It is NOT an active shooter simulation, and we will NOT be simulating intruders in the building. The lockdown drill will begin with an announcement over the school PA system as follows: "Students and Teachers: This is a hard lockdown drill. Please respond as you would in a hard lockdown situation." Teachers have been trained that "hard" lockdown means there is a threat inside the building and that students are gathered into the nearest room after which all interior

doors are locked; versus “soft lockdown,” which means that a threat is outside the building and that students continue with school as normal while we lock only the exterior doors of the building (as we did during the PGHS incident last year). The American Fork Police Department will be participating in our drill, and will have police vehicles parked at the back of the building. As soon as we announce the drill, they will enter the building and begin unlocking doors with keys provided to them by school administrators. Police will enter each room, assure students that this is a drill and that the students are safe, and speak briefly with each class, thanking the class for their participation, and sharing any instructions they have for the students. The police will not have their weapons drawn during our lockdown drill. They are very sensitive that these drills not be over-dramatized. AFPD conducts these drills with most schools in the area, including elementary schools, and have significant experience conducting these drills in a way that is instructive but also age-appropriate, especially for elementary school students.

What will be discussed with students before and after the drill? Our goal is to help students understand the lockdown process without using unnecessary details or graphic language, and without causing emotional stress to students. Ultimately, we want them to feel informed, empowered, and safer as a result of our training. We also want them to recognize that a well-planned and well-rehearsed response, including with law enforcement present, makes for a safer atmosphere. Intruder threats are not limited to shooters, and we will not discuss “shooting,” “shooters,” or other firearm scenarios with students. We are giving each of the teachers a training script to read to students before the drill, and will recommend that teachers keep to the script as closely as possible. If students ask public questions about active shooter scenarios, teachers will assure students they are SAFE at school, and encourage students to discuss those specific questions with parents at home, or privately with the teacher after class. The goal is to keep the drill focused on the process, not on an endless array of scenarios. We are sensitive that scenario imagery can be emotionally stressful for some children and adults, depending upon their life experience, circumstances, and personal emotional preparation levels. **Please see the script below that will be used for training students (adapted as appropriate for younger students).**

How are teachers and students trained, and how can parents help? We and AFPD have trained AHS security personnel and teachers on the three-step process of “[Avoid, Deny, Defend](#)” (Avoid the intruder; Deny the intruder entry into your space if you cannot avoid him; and if the first two steps fail, Defend yourself in any way possible, including by confronting the intruder if/when he enters your space.) AHS employees have completed online and video training, and have been trained on other lockdown protocols recognized by AFPD and law enforcement personnel across the country as best-practices in responding to lockdown emergencies. We do not spend time in school training students on these tactical defense approaches, other than the avoidance and denial by locking doors and quietly sheltering in a corner of a room away from windows if a hard lockdown is called. We encourage you as parents to speak with your children

if you feel that your children are emotionally mature enough to have a conversation about “[Avoid, Deny, Defend](#).” For more information on active shooter defense, see the Department of Homeland Security [Active Shooter Preparedness](#) resources page.

Lastly, in addition to all our study and preparations for scenarios like these, we also know that there are hundreds of families who are praying for the safety of our students and campus every day, and we believe in that kind of support and protection “after all that we can do.” ([2 Nephi 25:23](#)). If you have any questions or recommendations, please don’t hesitate to contact Mr. Wheeler, our Safety & Security Director, at bwheeler@ahsmail.com or me directly.

Sincerely, --G. Beckwith



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Principal
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AMERICAN HERITAGE SCHOOL
LOCKDOWN DRILL STUDENT COMMUNICATION SCRIPT

Dear Teachers,

Please read to your students the instructions below prior to the lockdown drill. **Please stay on script when speaking to students.** The language in the script may be adapted for younger students, but please stay as close to this script as you can. Importantly, this is not an active shooter simulation, and we discourage discussion or use of the words “shooters,” “shooting,” “guns,” “firearms,” etc., especially in elementary school. Please keep the focus on the basic lockdown and sheltering in place procedures. Comfort kits may be used for this drill if they are helpful in keeping younger children quiet and focused during the drill. **Some students will want to ask scenario questions and/or share graphic examples from past incidents publicized in the media. You should encourage students BEFORE TAKING QUESTIONS that those kinds of scenarios, examples, questions, and comments we are happy to discuss privately after class, or with parents at home, but that specific incident examples should not be discussed publicly at school, especially with elementary age children.**

Thank you!

TO BE READ TO STUDENTS BY TEACHERS:

Dear Students,

This coming Monday, March 20, at 8:45 a.m., we will be holding the school’s first K–12 lockdown drill. Our goal is to train you to respond as calmly as possible in the unlikely event of a lockdown emergency.

The lockdown drill will begin with Mr. Beckwith making an announcement over the school intercom as follows: “Students and Teachers: This is a hard lockdown drill. It is only a drill. Please respond as you would in a hard lockdown situation and wait quietly for the police to enter your room.”

The American Fork Police Department will be participating in our drill, and there will be police vehicles parked at the back of the building. As soon as we announce the drill, teachers will immediately gather any students in the hallways into the nearest room, lock the door, turn off the lights, and instruct all students in the room to move away from windows and sit on the floor or crouch in a corner or corners of the room.

Next, police will enter the building and begin unlocking doors with keys provided to them by school administrators. Do not open doors during a lockdown. Police will enter each room by unlocking the door with a key, and will speak briefly with each class. The police do this with almost all schools in the area, and we are grateful that they are helping us to practice as well.

Please know that you are safe at school! There is no specific threat that has prompted this training. All of the teachers and security staff at school have been trained to keep you safe, and this is just one more way that we are making it even safer for you at school.

If you have any questions about the lockdown process that we just explained, we will be happy to answer those questions. If you have other questions about specific scenarios or examples that you have heard about, please save those questions or examples to discuss with your parents at home or privately with me after class. Please do not discuss those examples with other students at school. Our goal is to keep our drill and this training focused on the lockdown process, NOT on past or possible incidents, which, depending upon the details, can be inappropriate to discuss at school, especially with younger children.

In addition to all our preparations to keep you safe at school, we also know that there are hundreds of families who are praying for your safety and for the safety of our school every day. We believe in that kind of protection “after all that we can do.” ([2 Nephi 25:23](#)).