



LIMIT FREQUENCY OF LOCK-DOWN DRILLS

SUMMARY:

In 2016, the Commonwealth of Virginia amended Code § 22.1-137.2 to increase the number of required Lockdown drills from two per year (held in September and January) to four lockdown drills per year with two to be held in the first twenty days of the school year. No research has been provided that having this many lock-down drills better prepares students to respond to threats such as active shooters. Yet there is evidence that excessive lock-down drills undermine student perception that school is a safe place, thus undermining student learning. Moreover, focusing exclusively on lock-down drills distracts from other tools that should be used to protect students, teachers, and staff. Reducing the number of mandated lock-down drills, ensuring that teachers have adequate training and providing structured mental health discussions, would minimize the risk of harm to students. The Board of Education should conduct research on the effectiveness of lock-down drills to prepare students and staff for external or internal threats.

WHEREAS, lock-down drills may produce anxiety, stress, and traumatic symptoms in some students or staff, as well as a loss of instructional time; and

WHEREAS, research on the effectiveness of lock-down drills in preparing students for crisis situations is limited and the potential harm of such drills should be balanced against their potential benefit; and

WHEREAS, focusing solely on lock-downs distracts from consideration of alternative or complementary safety tools such as lock-outs, discussions, and cultivating a climate where bystanders are likely to share information about threats;

THEREFORE, BE IT

RESOLVED that Virginia PTA urges the Board of Education to conduct research on the effectiveness of lock-down drills and how best to support student safety; and

RESOLVED that Virginia PTA supports training for teachers and staff related to the execution of lock-down drills, including providing mental health support for students related to their participation in lock-down drills; and

RESOLVED that Virginia PTA urges the General Assembly to adopt legislation that reduces the number of lock-down drills from four per year to three or less per year; and

RESOLVED that Virginia PTA supports providing notice to parents within 24 hours after the lock-down drill to support conversations at home with students.

RESOLVED that Virginia PTA supports a structured mental health discussion after each lock-down drill.

January 25, 2020, Adopted by the Virginia PTA 2020 Annual Meeting Attendees

