

## Student and Staff Safety

# SAFETY PLANS & DRILLS



**Statistically, schools remain an unlikely place for random community violence or active shooter situations, but understandably, there are still concerns and questions. Emergency preparedness is the educational counterpart to the many [safety investments](#) Fulton County Schools has made in its buildings.**

**As part of its overall safety and emergency preparedness plan, Fulton County School Board policy requires all schools to frequently complete evacuation, shelter-in-place, soft lockdown, and hard lockdown drills. These drills cover a variety of situations, such as fire or smoke, tornado/severe weather, bus accident, hazardous materials, intruder/unauthorized visitor, active shooter and other threats to safety.**

## Safety Plans

Each school has a safety plan that is reviewed annually by each school's leadership and district safety staff and then reported to the State of Georgia/Georgia Emergency Management Agency. Specifics of each plan are not releasable to safeguard students and staff; in short, having outsiders know what each plan includes would jeopardize the school's ability to safely enact its protections when needed.

Parents and community members should know that the safety plans are thorough and address the roles and responsibilities of staff and emergency responders; training for students and staff; threat assessment protocols; site plans and floorplans; emergency exits; and evacuation/reunification procedures. The plans also cover what students and staff should do during different emergency scenarios, which is why the routine practice of safety drills and exercises is important.



*A meeting of the Fulton County Youth and School Safety Coalition, where FCS is working with mayors as well as county and city police partners to address school safety.*

Along with existing safety planning efforts, the Fulton County School Board recently pledged support for Superintendent Mike Looney's commitment to safety by authorizing special funding to improve school safety processes.

## Safety Communication Tools

All schools use a tool called CrisisGo to quickly distribute information and directives to staff, via an app on their mobile devices, during emergency situations. The CrisisGo information is aligned to the school's overall safety plan and communicates simultaneously with the school system's Safety & Security team and other district leadership.



When an emergency is reported, teachers and/or staff members in the affected area will hear a specific tone on their mobile device and then are given instructions to follow via the CrisisGo app, such as how to secure their classroom, account for each student in their care, and what to do while awaiting more information. It also allows them to communicate back to the district's Safety & Security team and report on their surroundings and any critical needs.

## Types of Safety Drills

***Having routine safety drills and exercises gives students and staff the knowledge, skills and instinct to quickly respond in any safety situation.***

### Evacuation

An “evacuation” is when students and staff must be quickly moved from one location to another, whether that is inside the school, off a school bus, or to an off-site location. Scenarios can include fire or smoke, a bomb threat, a chemical odor, school bus accident, or other conditions as determined by school leaders. These drills are practiced more frequently because evacuation is a safety strategy used in many possible situations.

### Shelter-in-Place

“Shelter-in-Place” is when students and staff are moved from (or remain) within their classroom for their safety because there is an environmental threat. Similar to a soft lockdown (explained below), shelter-in-place uses the school building to provide protection from the outdoor environment, such as tornados and other severe weather, earthquakes or hazardous materials in the immediate area. Based on the threat’s severity, school leaders will decide whether learning should be halted and student movement within the school should be restricted. Students and staff who are outside will report inside immediately, and those in modular classrooms will either remain in place or be brought inside the school based on the type of threat.

### Soft Lockdown

A “soft lockdown” is when a threat or hazard is recognized **outside** of the school building. Situations may include a violent act or criminal activity in the immediate neighborhood, such as a home invasion or police pursuit in the area, or even situations like a dangerous animal near the playground.

A soft lockdown uses the security of the physical facility to act as protection. All interior and exterior doors are locked and student movement inside the school is limited. Any outside activity is discontinued, and all students must report inside immediately. Teaching and learning may still continue but with a heightened sense of awareness. Staff should be prepared to quickly transition to a hard lockdown (explained below) if needed.

### Hard Lockdown

A “hard lockdown” is when there is a threat or hazard **inside** of the school building or in situations when school leaders deem appropriate. Examples may include parental custody disputes, intruders or unauthorized visitors, and though less likely or as common, an active shooter situation.

A hard lockdown uses classroom security to protect students and staff from a safety threat. During a hard lockdown, all learning stops and students and staff take immediate actions to lock and secure doors, and employ the protection strategies they have learned during drills, such as hiding and keeping away from windows or doors. No students are allowed to leave their rooms until authorized by school leaders or safety personnel, and those who are outside must use their discretion whether to try moving inside the school or to evacuate to an off-site location. No one, including parents or community members, may enter the building while a hard lockdown is under way. Only emergency responders are allowed access.

While the likelihood is low, FCS will continue to prepare its response should there ever be an active shooter situation by implementing the U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s “Run. Hide. Fight.” protocol. In elementary schools, trained teachers and staff will lead age-appropriate drills using “Run. Hide. Fight.” strategies while middle/high schools will train staff and students in the protocol.

## DRILL FREQUENCY

### FIRST SEMESTER

#### August

*First Full Week of School:*

- Soft Lockdown Drill
- Hard Lockdown Drill
- Evacuation Drill
- Shelter-in-Place Drill

*Second Week of School:*

- Evacuation Drill

#### September

- Evacuation Drill

#### October

- Soft Lockdown Drill
- Hard Lockdown Drill
- Evacuation Drill

#### November

- Evacuation Drill
- Shelter-in-Place Drill  
(Severe Weather)

#### December

- Evacuation Drill

### SECOND SEMESTER

#### January

*First Full Week of School:*

- Soft Lockdown Drill
- Hard Lockdown Drill
- Evacuation Drill
- Shelter-in-Place Drill

#### February

- Evacuation Drill
- Shelter-in-Place Drill  
(Severe Weather)

#### March

- Soft Lockdown Drill
- Hard Lockdown Drill
- Evacuation Drill

#### April

- Evacuation Drill

#### May

- Evacuation Drill