



Weston Public Schools
Office of the Superintendent
William S. McKersie, Ph.D.

MEMORANDUM

To: Weston Public School Families and Staff
Date: March 22, 2018
Subject: Weston Public Schools Safety & Security Drills

With school security at the forefront of many discussions locally and nationally, I want to expand on my February 19 safety and security statement (http://www.westonps.org/cf_news/view.cfm?newsid=850). The Maryland school shooting (on Tuesday, March 20) has increased concerns sparked by the Parkland shooting. I must reemphasize the fundamental point of my February 19 statement:

The safety and security of Weston students and staff has been the highest priority for the Board of Education (BOE), superintendent, administration, and Town leaders for many years. The district and Town have invested in a multi-faceted approach to ensuring our schools are safe and nurturing for all students. Two broad approaches are essential to Weston's safety: first, we have invested in the structural, technological, and personnel resources required for safety and security; second, we have invested in the professionals required to connect with students and families in crisis.

I am writing now to outline the **School Safety Procedures and Drills in the Weston Public Schools**. One of the most important aspects of school security is preparing both students and staff for threats and danger—be it fire, storms, or guns and other weapons. I want families and staff to know how we prepare, the frequency by which we prepare and the reasons why certain preparations and drills may have altered schedules or patterns.

Let me assure families and staff that each school plans all of its drills (Fire and Crisis) based on the best safety practices, as required by Connecticut Law (CGS 10-231), and in coordination with the Weston Police Department and other town emergency services. CGS 10-231 requires each local and regional board of education to provide the following:

- A fire drill to be held in the schools no later than 30 days after the first day of each school year, and at least once each month thereafter;
- A crisis response drill may be substituted for a fire drill once every three months in consultation with the local law enforcement. A crisis drill can be anything

from a shelter in place, lockdown, evacuation on campus, evacuation to an off campus site, or a secure school drill (for high winds and other natural crises).

Our schools regularly plan and evaluate fire drills and crisis drills. Drills occur announced and unannounced from August through June. They are vital to ensure that all students and staff are prepared should any security event occur. The school administration uses its best judgement when outside events could impact a scheduled security drill. For instance, this school year, an unannounced crisis drill at the High School was scheduled for a date shortly after the Parkland shooting. The administration felt it best not to create panic by following through with an unannounced crisis drill so close to the tragedy in Parkland. The drill has been rescheduled for a time between now and the end of the school year.

School safety and security, as well as how we plan for and implement our safety protocols, are regularly discussed, practiced, and coordinated with the Weston Police Department and other Town emergency services. The coordination among the Weston Public Schools, Weston Police Department, and Weston Fire Department is essential to safety and security. All drills, regardless of type, are logged and evaluated by school administrators and appropriate public safety officials as part of our efforts towards continuous improvement.

In closing, families and staff should know that that the administration currently is reviewing our School Safety Procedures and Drills. This is standard practice, but it has become especially important in the wake of the Parkland and Maryland shootings. As some have heard me say, this is the third time I have had a leadership role in or around a public school district after a major school shooting (i.e., Columbine, Sandy Hook and Parkland). In each case, I have learned that it is a critical time to privately and publicly assess all aspects of our security apparatus and approaches. Our reviews are conducted in close coordination with the Weston Police Department. We keep the Board of Education informed through regular Executive Sessions.

I will continue to regularly update Weston families and staff on safety and security. Frequent communications are important, but please understand that, for the sake of security, we must keep aspects of our procedures and practices private. Thank you for your cooperation and support.