

PT schools roll out ALICE training

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The nationally recognized ALICE emergency preparedness training is set to roll out throughout the 2018-19 school year at the Port Townsend School District.

Port Townsend High School Principal Carrie Ehrhardt addressed the district's school board Sept. 6 on ALICE, which stands for Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter and Evacuate.

As Ehrhardt explained, the research-based ALICE training was developed, through research, to prepare people to respond during violent intruder or active shooter situations, but its principles can be applied to any emergency event.

“The overall goal of ALICE is to provide individuals with survival-enhancing options, for those critical moments in the gap between when a violent situation begins, and when law enforcement arrives on the scene,” Ehrhardt said.

Ehrhardt informed the board that the school district has three staff members who are now certified as ALICE instructors — herself, Patrick Gaffney and Justin Gray — in addition to two Port Townsend Police officers, including School Resource Officer Jeremy Vergin and Sgt. Troy Surber.

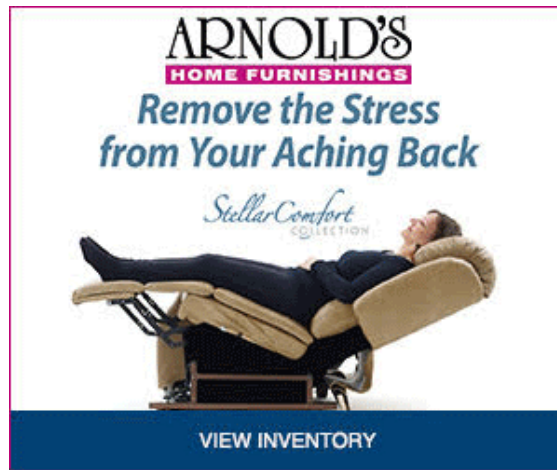
Ehrhardt elaborated the rest of the district's staff are slated to undergo a “blended learning” model, whose deadlines are Sept. 30 for all staff to complete online training, a two-hour afternoon session on the early-release Wednesday of Oct. 17, to be led by the district's ALICE trainers, and school-based training scenarios, to be scheduled at each individual site.

Ehrhardt noted student training would follow during the second half of the year.

“The strength of the ALICE model is that it allows us to be hands-on in customizing the possible ways to prepare and react,” Ehrhardt said. “Our ALICE trainers will work with teachers to determine the best, and most developmentally appropriate, ways of instructing our students.”

Ehrhardt pointed out that each school facility offers its own structural advantages and disadvantages during such scenarios, from line-of-sight down hallways to space between buildings on campus.

“We're committed to making our students feel empowered and confident, even during times of crisis,” Ehrhardt said. “This is not a fear-based model. No scare tactics will be used in student training.”



Ehrhardt added safety letters to parents regarding ALICE training have been mailed to the homes of all their students' families, and the district is hosting a parent and community meeting about ALICE, as well as the rest of its safety procedures, at Blue Heron Middle School Sept. 17 at 5:30 p.m.

When Port Townsend School Board Director Jennifer James-Wilson asked if they would be working with the Chimacum School District on ALICE, Ehrhardt recalled that Chimacum had conducted ALICE training last year, but would not be coordinating its efforts with Port Townsend.

"The Chimacum schools are working more closely with the Jefferson County Sheriff's Department, while we're working primarily with the Port Townsend Police," Port Townsend School District Superintendent John Polm said.

Polm issued a public statement Sept. 7, describing ALICE as in line with the standards of the Departments of Education, Justice, Homeland Security, and Health and Human Services, as well as the Federal Emergency Management Agency and Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Polm listed the agencies who joined the Port Townsend School District and Police Department in training this May, which included the Chimacum and Quilcene school districts, the Port of Port Townsend, Jefferson Healthcare and the Jefferson County Health Department.

"Port Townsend schools put student and staff safety as their number-one priority," Polm said. "Prior to the student training and safety talks occurring in schools, parents will be notified through a letter home, or in the school's monthly newsletter."