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k12 focus

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Mandated Law Enforcement Drills

In August 2018, Illinois mandated public schools to conduct active shooter drills within 90 days of the start of the school year (105 ILCS 128/20(c)). The drills are required to evaluate schools' emergency preparedness and must be conducted when students are present in the school building. The Act requires participation from all school personnel and students, but school administrators may exempt students at their discretion.

The 2019-2020 school year will be the first school year in which this law is implemented and these drills are required. It is recommended that districts schedule the drills during the summer months, since they must be observed by law enforcement and be conducted within the first few weeks of the school year.

There is little legislative guidance on how to conduct such active shooter drills. School district policies and safety plans should be followed, but more importantly, school districts should approach these exercises with caution. Although 95% of public schools conduct active shooter drills, many result in students suffering emotional trauma and staff suffering physical and/or emotional injuries because they were unplanned or ill-advised.

The National Association of School Psychologists produced the following article to help to guide districts: [Best Practice Considerations for Schools in Active Shooter and Other Armed Assault Drills](#).

Recommendations When Conducting Active Shooter Drills

- Consider educating the student population regarding active shooter drills before conducting simulations.
- Drills should be conducted with student age and maturity in mind. A high school's active shooter drill may be much different than an elementary school drill.
- Make sure that students, parents and staff are notified of the drill before it occurs.
- Consider posting notice of the drill on social media to avoid any confusion amongst the community.
- Allow student and staff to opt out if they may suffer trauma from such a drill.
- Involve mental health professionals before, during and after active shooter drills to identify students that may have adverse reactions.

Considerations for Students with Disabilities

Districts often overlook students with disabilities when conducting active shooter drills. These students will generally require more assistance during a crisis and preparation is key to assisting these students.

Recommendations for students with disabilities.

- Instructions during a drill should be given to special education students catered toward their disabilities. For example, if a student normally uses picture schedules, they should be given picture schedule instructions during a drill. If a student may have trouble staying quiet during lockdown, consider creating a bag of preferred activities for use during a drill.
- Make sure disabled students are able to identify an emergency. For example, deaf students that are not able to hear announcements must be able to identify an emergency and be able to receive instruction.
- Consider introducing students to emergency personnel to avoid fear on the part of the students and familiarize emergency personnel with students they may encounter in an emergency.

The Five Hour Instructional Day is Back

Effective July 1, 2019, [Public Act 101-012, 105 ILCS 5/10-19.05 of the Illinois School Code](#), reinstated the five-hour requirement for a school day to count as a day of attendance. The law is fundamentally the same as the previous School Code provision (105 ILCS 5/18-8.05) which was repealed in 2018 when Illinois passed the evidence-based funding formula.

The new law is different in two key respects. First, the maximum number of teacher in-service days was increased from five to ten where students are in school for three or more clock hours and teachers participate in an in-service training for two or more hours thereafter. Second, the Act adds the following activities toward the five-clock hour requirement of a day of attendance: (1) dual credit courses; (2) supervised career development experiences as defined in the Postsecondary Workforce Readiness Act; (3) youth apprenticeships; and (4) blended learning programs.

The Act also allows e-learning to count towards the five-hour school day requirement. Each hour of e-learning counts as one hour of instructional time as long as the E-learning days section (105 ILCS 5/10-20.56) of the Illinois School Code is followed.

Serious Consequences of Not Following Copyright Laws

A Texas federal court recently ordered a Houston school district to pay \$9.2 million in damages stemming from a lawsuit by DynaStudy, an education publisher whose copyright the school district violated. Despite many warnings and attempts to cease the infringement, the school district allowed the copying and posting of its materials online. DynaStudy provides students with materials to prepare for unit tests and standardized assessments, in line with Texas state standards. However, district employees duplicated and shared these materials despite warnings on the documents prohibiting copying. In one case, a high school employee posted DynaStudy physics and chemistry resources online for anyone to download which resulted in the materials being downloaded across the state of Texas.

Although this case is a bit extreme, it illustrates the importance of compliance with the U.S. Copyright Act of 1976, which grants authors or owners immediate rights in their original works of authorship in any tangible medium of expression that can be perceived, reproduced, or communicated. A copyright owner is entitled to control how the original work may be copied, distributed or utilized. Anyone violating the exclusive rights of the copyright author or owner may be sued for copyright infringement. School District officials should take note of their district's copyrighted materials and ensure that both staff and students are in compliance.



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