



CREATING CONVERSATIONS ABOUT SCHOOL SECURITY



As a parent, there's nothing more important than keeping your child safe. And today, there's an urgent safety issue facing children - school security.

LenelS2, the global leader in advanced physical security solutions, has launched On The Safe Side, a program focused on empowering communities to have more impactful conversations about school safety.

But we know that having conversations with your kids and your schools can be overwhelming - and we're here to help. This resource guide, developed in consultation with **National PTA** and clinical psychologist and children's author, **Dr. Regine Muradian**, includes tips and questions you can use when talking to your children and schools about safety.

TIPS FOR TALKING TO YOUR KIDS

Talking to your children about school safety is a delicate balance - you want them to be informed and empowered, but not scared and anxious. Here are some commonly faced questions and concerns from parents with tips about how to best approach them with your children.

PARENT CONCERN

Is it helpful to speak to my child about school safety at home?

TIP

Because information is readily available to children today via social and other media outlets, we recommend having age-appropriate conversations to gauge what they know about their school safety plan. Having these open and honest conversations early will help avoid the spread of misinformation and can provide your child with a sense of calmness and security in the event of an emergency. If you have concerns about how your school handles emergency situations, ask your school administrators what their protocol is for communicating to parents and families in the event of an emergency.¹

According to clinical psychologist and children's author, Dr. Regine Muradian, parents need real solutions on how to talk to their kids. You may have trouble finding the right wording or may feel anxious about broaching conversations around difficult topics. Here are some examples you can use:

- What did you learn during today's security drill? How did it make you feel?
- Do you have any questions about the security drill?
- I am here if you need to talk when you are ready.

PARENT CONCERN

What should my child know about their school's physical infrastructure?

TIP

Begin by reassuring your children that they are safe at school and the adults on campus are there to protect them. To help minimize any fear and anxiety your kids might have, encourage them to ask school personnel and administrators where the school exits are located and any questions they may have about security drills. Additionally, provide reassurance that the school has a plan in place and that the adults are there to guide them through any situation.²

Teachers and parents need to make it clear to students which administrators are there to provide guidance in order to help them maintain a sense of safety and control. Administrators and teachers can take time to identify and visit each school exit. Parents also need to know whom they can contact when there is an emergency and a lockdown. If you have concerns about how your school handles emergency situations, ask your school administrators what the protocol is for communicating to parents and families in the event of an emergency.³



PARENT CONCERN

How can I help my child if they're feeling anxious about security drills, things they're seeing online, etc.?

TIP

When our kids are anxious, we naturally want to reassure them and make them feel better. Sometimes it helps to remind kids that parents get anxious too! You should talk to your children openly about their feelings and remind them that school is the safest place for them to be. School administrators have tools and plans in place to handle emergencies if and when they arise. Also, you can encourage children to speak honestly with their teachers or school administrators about their safety concerns so they know their school is there to support and help them through any situation.⁴

Children need to be aware of lockdown drills and be able to process these emotions at home with you prior to the day it's happening. Children are exposed to a plethora of information via technology and are very informed on what may take place. The more they are exposed to security drills and practice, the less fearful they will become.⁵



PARENT CONCERN

I want to be sure to reinforce my school's current safety protocols - what can I tell my children about lockdown drills and other safety measures they see at school?

TIP

When speaking to your children about safety protocols and drills, it is vital to strike a balance between being informative, transparent and calm. The key is to have an open dialog with your children. While a school safety plan may include the need to practice, there is a very low probability of actually needing to use it.⁶

PARENT CONCERN

How do I empower my child to trust the adults in their school to help keep them safe?

TIP

It is important to remind children that the adults at their school - teachers, principal, guidance counselors, etc. - are there to protect them and keep them safe. Work with your child to find their "trusted adults" at school so they have someone to turn to if they feel unsafe or want someone to talk to. With this in mind, you will still always be your child's go-to in a time of crisis. Ensure that your child knows how to best reach you or another family member during an emergency. If there is an emergency, make sure to dedicate time for a discussion about the event with your child afterwards.⁷

QUESTIONS TO HELP START A SECURITY CONVERSATION WITH YOUR SCHOOL

The topic of school security can be overwhelming and challenging to broach with your school's staff and leadership, and often, you might not be sure of what important questions to ask. Below is a guide of some starter questions that can help begin a conversation.

1. How does the school control access to its premises and what are the visitor check-in procedures?
2. Does the school have security personnel or safety officers on-site and if so, how can they be a resource to my child?
3. How does the school communicate with parents during emergencies or safety-related incidents, and does the school have any conversations with children around the drill process (what to expect, what will happen)?
4. What physical security features does our school have?
5. How does the school handle lockdown situations and what is the protocol for securing the building in case of an external threat?
6. How often does the school conduct lockdown drills, and what are students told in terms of the types of safety risk they face?
7. How does the school collaborate with local law enforcement agencies?
8. What type of training do staff members receive to manage an emergency?
9. Are parents given tools on how to approach these conversations with their children prior to the drills?
10. What systems are in place for students to provide feedback on their safety and express their concerns to the school with anonymity?

Sources

[CISA.gov](https://www.cisa.gov); [PTA.org](https://www.pta.org); [StandWithParkland.org](https://standwithparkland.org);

Dr. Regine Muradian, Clinical Psychologist and children's author

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For more information about the On The Safe Side program, please visit:

LenelS2.com/OnTheSafeSide

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