
Secure School Protocol

(Lockdown, Hold and Secure, Shelter in Place)

RATIONALE:

This protocol supports the Safe Schools Pillar Policy (Policy No. 6.0 – Safe Schools) by providing direction for response requirements in the event of a serious violent threat or violent incident that would endanger the lives of staff or students (Lockdown). The protocol also provides response requirements in the event of an external threat not related to schools (Hold and Secure) and environmental threats outside of the school (Shelter in Place).

Schools will incorporate the following procedures/guidelines into their School Lockdown Plans.

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB) believes that every student has the right to learn, work and be present in a safe and secure environment. However, the possibility of a major incident of violence is a reality that cannot be overlooked. Everyone needs to know how to minimize the risk of harm to him/herself and how to protect our children, in the event of a major incident or threat of school violence.

School administrators, staff, students, parents, and police all have roles and responsibilities to support and implement the secure school protocol to help reduce the risk of harm to staff, students, visitors, and facility users should a violent or serious incident occur.

TERMINOLOGY:

This *provincial terminology is mandatory* to describe the type of situation occurring at or near a school. The terms are to be used consistently in all Ontario publicly funded schools as it allows for easy integration when staff, students and emergency service personnel are transferred from one jurisdiction to another.

“Lockdown”: (usually initiated by Hamilton Police Services, sometimes by Principal or school personnel)

***A lockdown is defined by police as the restriction of movement during the time of a potentially serious violent threat or violent incident that would endanger the lives of students and staff.*

- used *only* when there is a major incident or threat of serious violence within the school, or in relation to the school
- the threat is inside the school, or is on school property, and poses an immediate threat to the students and staff
- *all movement within the school and into and out of the school is restricted*
- *doors remain open to permit police immediate entry*
- Police will notify the school when Lockdown is ended

"Hold and Secure": (School most likely to be notified by Hamilton Police Services)

- is used when the school is secured due to an ongoing situation outside and not related to the school that requires all persons to remain in the building (e.g. bank robbery near a school)
- *the school continues to function normally, with the exterior doors locked until the situation is resolved*
- a staff member posted near each entrance to ensure no one leaves the building
- all movement in and out of the school is restricted
- exterior facing windows should be covered or blinds drawn, lights dimmed, where possible
- police will notify the school when it can come out of 'Hold and Secure'

"Shelter in Place": (May be recommended by Police, Fire Dept. Emergency Medical Service (EMS), etc.)

- is used for an environmental, or weather related situation, where it is necessary to keep all occupants within the school to protect them (e.g., may include chemical spills, blackouts, explosions or extreme weather conditions)
- *people enter and remain in a building with the doors and windows closed*
- fans, including heating and air conditioning units, should be turned off to prevent outside air from entering the building
- normal operations may continue within the building.

The terminology used to initiate a secure school situation should be in clear language and leave no misunderstanding as to what is expected. Announcement notices using standard language to identify each of the terminology categories were previously sent to school offices to post beside the PA system or to pre-record for use in an emergency.

This information applies to the school buildings, portables, facility users such as Daycares, Recreation Centers, Early Years Centers, etc. Principals need to ensure that announcement notices are provided for each of these locals within the building.

PROCEDURES:

1.0 Mandatory Requirements for Secure School Drills

- 1.1 One "Hold and Secure" drill must occur once each year—record date and time;
- 1.2 One "Shelter in Place" drill must occur once each year—record date and time;
- 1.3 A minimum of two "Lockdown" drills must occur each school year—record date and time;
- 1.4 For all drills, Principals shall set the date of drills and oversee the drill; however, police support/assistance should be utilized whenever possible during drills;
- 1.5 Staff, students, and parents should be given prior notice of impending drills;
- 1.6 Notify Police, EMS, and Fire Department of impending drills, where appropriate;
- 1.7 Area supervisors of caretaking should be involved in drills.
- 1.8 The school may invite the Fire Department and EMS to a drill to test all of the systems enabling them to become familiar with school lockdown plans.

2.0 Staff, Student, Parent Responsibilities

All members of the school community have responsibility for supporting and implementing the lockdown protocol and school level plans.

- 2.1 **Principal:** The Principal is responsible for overall school planning, the final content of the school plan, scheduling of drills, advising parent, guardian or caregivers, inviting police, fire and EMS to participate in and be aware of planning and drills, training of students and staff; and the overall safety of staff and students. In an actual incident (not a drill), the police are responsible for management of the threat and subsequent criminal investigation; however, the Principal shall provide full cooperation with police.
- 2.2 **Staff:** School staff have the overall responsibility for the training, safety and well-being of students. Staff in non-school sites also have a responsibility to take part in training and follow the direction of the site manager. Administrators, during a violent incident, have additional responsibilities in terms of working closely with police.
- 2.3 **Students:** Students have a responsibility to be familiar with the plan and to quickly respond to staff directions during a crisis situation. Any student with prior information or knowledge of an individual or a potential situation which may result in a violent incident must come forward with that information as soon as possible.
- 2.4 **Police:** Police are responsible for responding to and investigating violent incidents. During a violent incident, police will assume command and control of the response and investigation and will liaise closely with school administration and other emergency services throughout the process.
- 2.5 **Parents/Guardians:** Parents and guardians must be informed of the existence of the lockdown plans in the school and should reinforce with their children, student responsibilities to follow directions during a crisis and disclose any information they may have prior to or during a crisis situation. Parents should be informed they are not to use their cell phones to communicate with their children in lockdown. Parents are responsible for keeping their child's contact information up to date so they can easily be reached by staff in the event of an emergency.

3.0 Communication to Parents Regarding Secure School Procedures

- 3.1 A Secure School brochure for parents and families is available on HWDSB's website that principals can reference in the student agendas and school newsletters each school year.
- 3.2 School newsletters should include regular reminders for parents as to the emergency off-site location for staff and students should the need arise to relocate students in an emergency. This location should also be posted on the school website.

4.0 Floor Plans

- 4.1 School Level:
 - Accurate floor plans are a key component of lockdown plans and are important from both a planning and a response standpoint.
 - Consideration should be given to colour coding floor plans using three colours, such as red, green and blue.

- *Red indicates danger areas of the school that cannot be locked down safely*
- *Green identifying areas where staff and students are to proceed to safely lock down*
- *Blue areas identify command post locations that may be utilized by police, depending on the nature of the incident.*
- Colour coded master plan is held by the Principal and community partners and provided to occasional staff.
- Normally, the main office will be a command post location, with another area within the school identified as an alternate command post location. A third off-site command post location may be identified if neither on-site command post location is available. Off-site evacuation locations should also be identified and included, with copies of the floor plan available as needed.
- *Non-colour floor plans should be posted throughout the school, at least in every classroom and at every entry point to the school. In multi-level buildings, it is suggested that only the floor plans relevant to a specific level be posted on that level.*
- It is vitally important that police have current, accurate information about the school emergency personnel.
- Buildings, entrances and all rooms within building need to be clearly identified. *In situations where more than one building exists on school grounds, each building should be clearly identified, on all sides, with a building identifier, such as a number.* All portables and external school buildings shall be clearly identified. All exterior doors shall be clearly identified, for example, doors marked A, B, C, etc. All rooms within the building should be clearly marked with room numbers. Floor plans shall reflect most recent modifications.
- *Police and schools should plan in advance how police will gain access to the school in the event of a lockdown. Floor plans and facility master keys should be up to date and available at the command post, for emergency responders who may be involved in any type of search of the premises. It is particularly important that those elementary schools that have opted to lock their doors during the school day have a plan for making keys available at the command post, to emergency services personnel.*

4.2 Board Level

- Facilities Management to send electronic copies of all school floor plans to police and update as new schools are built
- Board to consider, over the long term, installing mechanisms to notify persons who are outside and in high noise level areas when lockdown is initiated (e.g. outdoor speakers, strobe lights)
- Facilities Management will ensure all portables in the system are numbered
- Numbers will appear on the upper corners under the fascia
- The portable numbers are to be included on the SPEAR data sheet for Hamilton Police Service

5.0 Facility Users: Included in planning, training and drills

- Facility users are those persons/organizations who share school space during the regular hours of the school day (e.g., Daycares, Best Start, Parenting Centres, etc.), including before and after school child care;
- Facility users and school administrators must have each other's cell phone numbers;
- Facility users locations and cell phone numbers must be on the SPEAR data sheets;
- *Facility users must be aware of, and practice, lockdown drills two times per year.*

6.0 Initiating a 'Lockdown' (e.g., immediate safety threat to staff and students)

- Any adult who receives information requiring a lockdown should initiate it immediately using the PA system
- *Announce:* "This is a Lockdown" be affixed near the PA or near a microphone
- All students remain in classrooms
- Students in halls and washrooms report to the nearest classroom immediately
- Teachers close (and lock, where possible) classroom doors, shut lights off, direct students to classroom area away from doors, down on the floor, remain quiet
- HWDSB provides standard announcement to be posted beside PA systems to ensure correct terminology is used (shelter in place, hold and secure, lockdown)

6.1 Staff and Student Response to a Lockdown

6.1.1 If in the classroom:

- Gather everyone in the immediate vicinity into the classroom if it is safe to do so
- Lock the classroom door
- Make the area appear vacant by doing the following:
 - Stay away from doors and windows
 - Turn off lights
 - Close blinds
 - Be aware of sight lines
 - If there is a window in the classroom door, consider covering the window
 - Take cover if available (get behind something solid)
 - Remain absolutely quiet
 - Take attendance (to be done by teachers), and keep copy thereof on person
 - Not use a cell phone (students and staff). Cell phones should be shut off or put on vibrate
 - Consider barricading doors where possible, when doors cannot be locked. Barricading can sometimes provide additional protection against an intruder

6.1.2 If in 'open' areas inside the school: (e.g. cafeterias, libraries, gymnasiums, hallways, etc.)

- Staff should direct students to the nearest secure areas
- If unable to enter a secure area, find shelter with furniture, hall closets, etc.
- If near an exit and unable to go to a secure area, leave the building and go to the emergency off-site 'safe location'

6.1.3 If in a portable:

- Tip tables/desks onto their sides with desktops facing out
- Place all desks in a circle
- Gather students within the circle
- Stay down on the floor below the top edge of the desk

6.1.4 If in the washroom:

- Students in the washroom should go immediately to the closest classroom if it is safe to do so

- If it is not safe to leave the washroom, students should lock the stall door and sit on the toilet with their legs up
- In elementary schools, an adult who normally works in close proximity to student washrooms, and believes it is safe to do so, may check washrooms after gathering in students from the immediate vicinity of a classroom, prior to locking down.
- In secondary schools, it is recommended that training includes an explanation to students that they are responsible for getting out of the washrooms immediately upon hearing a lockdown announced and getting to the nearest classroom or another area that is identified as a safe area. As a last resort, staff or students trapped in a washroom should attempt to somehow secure the bathroom door, enter a stall, lock the door and climb on top of the toilet.

6.1.5 If the fire alarm rings during a lockdown:

- Once a lockdown has been initiated, staff and students shall not respond as they normally would to a fire alarm, but shall remain locked down, if it is safe to do so.
- Staff and students must always be aware of other dangers such as fire and be prepared to respond accordingly in order to ensure their own safety.

6.1.4 If outside of school building:

- Current procedures address where staff and students outside the school should go in the event of a lockdown, including a lockdown that occurs during recess or during arrival and dismissal times.
- People outside of the school personnel (e.g. parents, lunch supervisors, volunteers, bus drivers, etc.), will be advised, at the start of each school year, via school letter, where the evacuation sites are located.
- In order to ensure that those who are outside the school building are aware that the school is locking down, either the PA system must be capable of being activated outside the school or another means of alert must be determined (continuous ringing of an outdoor bell). Consideration should also be given to a visual indicator that can be used to indicate a lockdown has been called.
- Those who are outside the school when a lockdown is called shall not re-enter the school but shall proceed immediately to a pre-determined off-site evacuation location.
- Once at the location, staff and students shall remain in that location until further advised by administration or police.
- Plans should include the taking of attendance at the off-site evacuation location(s).

7.0 Procedures To End A Lockdown

7.1 There is a need to include the same level of authenticity to ending a lockdown as to initiating one. Plans to conclude a lockdown will vary by location.

- The decision to end a lockdown shall be made only after approval of the on-scene police incident commander
- If possible, the principal should make the announcement to end a lockdown after direction from police

- Police/school administration should plan some sort of identification process, as part of the announcement, so that the occupants of a locked room know that whoever is giving the all-clear is, in fact, authentic
- A room-to-room visit from police/school administration, while staff and students remain in the classroom until the police and/or principal come to get you
- School plans should include a procedure for notification of end of lockdown at emergency off-site location
- Notification to parents that a lockdown has ended will be done by Synrevoice and on the school website by Corporate Communications.

8.0 Post-Lockdown Recovery

- Following a lockdown, a debriefing should occur in all situations. The nature and severity of the incident will dictate who should be in the debriefing. In serious situations where injuries or loss of life occurs, the Board's crisis response team will normally be engaged. In all cases, communication with parents is vital.
- Each school plan, as well as the Board system plan, shall be thoroughly reviewed annually, including updating the SPEAR data sheet.
- Following an actual incident requiring "lockdown," a written report about the event is to be completed and submitted to the Board's Emergency Preparedness Committee by the Principal or site manager.

9.0 Procedures for 'Hold and Secure'

(Hold and Secure plan is to be included in the safe school plan for the school)

- If students and staff are outdoors, ring bell for everyone to re-enter the building
- Announce 'Hold and Secure';
- The Board will provide standard announcements to be posted beside PA systems to ensure correct terminology is used when a Hold and Secure is announced.
- Lock exterior doors;
- Dim lights and draw blinds, where possible;
- All movement into and out of school is restricted;
- Assign staff member near each entrance to ensure no one leaves the building;
- The school continues to function normally;
- An announcement is made to end 'Hold and Secure'.

10.0 Procedures For Shelter In Place

(Shelter in Place plan is to be included in the safe school plan for the school)

- Administrators, or designates, receiving information requiring 'Shelter in Place' should initiate it immediately using the PA system;
- The Board will provide standard announcements to be posted beside PA systems to ensure correct terminology is used when a Shelter in Place is announced.
- If students and staff are outdoors, ring bell for everyone to re-enter the building;
- Close doors and windows;
- Fans, including heating and air conditioning units, should be turned off to prevent outside air from entering the building.
- Normal operations continue within the building;
- An announcement is made to end 'Shelter in Place'.

11.0 Controlled Evacuation

- In the event of a prolonged situation, or a situation where the threat has been contained (e.g. barricaded individual), school plans should state that Police may initiate a controlled evacuation of the school.
- Police will make the decision as to whether a controlled evacuation of a school under lockdown is a viable option and will direct the evacuation process. This will normally be done on a room by room basis, with evacuees being escorted by police to the evacuation location.

12.0 Media Messages During Lockdown, Hold & Secure, Shelter in Place

12.1 Communication with parents, guardians, and the community, in general, is important so as to ensure a good understanding of lockdown procedures, without instilling fear. Coordinated and consistent messaging from all partners is essential to maintaining public confidence.

- Corporate Communications will facilitate all communication during lockdowns, hold and secure, and shelter in place situations, in consultation with Hamilton Police Services;
- Corporate Communications will provide synvoice, board website announcements, and media outlets, with information during a secure school situation where appropriate;
- Regular updates will be provided if a secure school situation is prolonged.
- Media personnel from police and school boards should share press releases prior to their release to the media.
- Following a Lockdown, Corporate Communications will prepare a communication for parents to be sent home with each student at the end of the day.
- Police may determine that a parent, guardian or caregiver staging area needs to be established where parents, guardians or caregivers can go to learn the most up-to-date information about the situation at the school. This site will be an area away from the immediate emergency threat.

13.0 Training

- The orientation of new hires to HWDSB includes mandatory lockdown training.
- Schools must provide lockdown review training for all staff during each school year, as early in the school year as possible
- Schools should consider holding assemblies, using the PA system or a specific instructional unit to train secondary students on lockdown procedures.
- Classroom teachers should be responsible for training students in elementary schools

At the beginning of each school year, Principals shall:

- review the school lockdown protocol staff; including facility users, volunteers, etc.
- update the SPEAR data sheet with Police by November 1 annually;
- ensure that students, parents and staff understand the rationale and expectations of the secure school drills;
- inform parents of the school's secure school plan through newsletters or as part of student agenda information.

14.0 Monitor and Review

- This protocol is to be reviewed once every two years via the Police/School Board Liaison Committee agenda.