



March 6, 2018

Dear Panda Parents,

Many of you joined us at yesterday's PTA meeting, where Jamie Bartlett, ACPS's Asst. Director of Safety & Security, and ACPS's new COO, Mignon Anthony, spoke to us about school safety, as it pertains to gun violence and the new ALICE protocol.

Here are some of the key takeaways from Mr. Bartlett's presentation:

- ALICE training stresses evacuating versus sheltering in place during an active threat. This is a shift from prior training, which stressed hiding during an active shooter incident.
- Mr. Bartlett conveyed that he is on top of ACPS's security and shares our desire to get every school trained and prepared.
- His presentation was brief and did not include as many concrete details as we would have liked about curriculum development, a definitive timeline for implementing the new protocol, or coordination with other Alexandria City departments like Parks and Recreation and the Alexandria Police Department.
- The goal seems to be to get teachers trained by summer and focus on drills to have students acclimated to the new procedures beginning in the fall.

His talk left room for a lot of questions – many of which our outstanding and vigilant PTA members asked him directly.

It was apparent after the meeting that some parents took issue with the tone of Mr. Bartlett's presentation and found some of his remarks insensitive.

ACPS's new Chief Operating Officer, Mignon Anthony, was present and, although she is brand new to ACPS, inspired a great deal of confidence and seemed well prepared to address the security needs of our schools. She followed up on quite a few questions posed by our members.

Something very important was reinforced by yesterday's PTA meeting: **our principal, Seth Kennard, is absolutely on top of Charles Barrett's safety and security, is living and breathing this work, and is 100% the gold standard.** On his own time, out of intense interest – and with immeasurable stake in active shooter response training – he's even attended the Alexandria Community Police Academy, just to better understand how the city's response works and to meet the Police Chief. Rather than wait for the city-wide roll-out, he's already worked with the PTA to find money for supplies and training tools to empower teachers and staff to act in an emergency. He is so far ahead of ACPS in thinking through our individual school's crisis response, that the COO announced (at our meeting yesterday morning) that CBES will be one of two pilot schools that will help create and shape our school system's student/parent ALICE protocol curriculum.

We still have a lot of questions we need answered. For now, we have identified four points that we believe parents can make headway on, that pertain directly to ACPS:

1. Follow-through on threat assessments:

All ACPS schools have undergone risk assessments. An investigator visited our school last year and took notes and photos with the goal of identifying potential security problems, traffic flow, etc. It is our understanding that ACPS principals have not received a report on the assessments' findings, which, we assume, would also include recommendations for improvement. We'd like Seth (and all ACPS principals) to have access to these reports immediately. And we'd like to know if and how those improvements will be paid for, should the need exist.

2. Time for teacher/staff training:

ACPS has released a timeline that tells us that we can now roll out the new active shooter training for teachers and staff, something that our school has been pushing for since October. Unfortunately, at this point in the school year, we are out of Professional Development days. The training is emotionally and psychologically taxing for teachers, and would best be done on a day when they aren't also teaching. Mr. Kennard will figure this out – but it is important for ACPS to know that we need non-instructional time set aside for this training, and that it should be done during paid, working hours.

3. School psychologists, social workers, and PBIS:

We are incredibly lucky to have Ms. Tush, Ms. Bonilla, and Ms. Price at our school, and to have a principal who has been prescient enough to foresee the need and dedicate precious resources toward keeping them here full-time. Our school works to support students and families in every way possible – and provides a positive behavior framework that teaches

our children about citizenship and care and concern for their peers. Our local middle and high schools do not have the same outstanding resources, and, where they are available, they certainly do not enjoy the same generous ratio.

4. Turnover in the ACPS Central Office:

As mentioned above, the COO, Mignon Anthony, is brand new. She is also outstanding and we are lucky to have her. However, she is just one example of the high turnover rate at the Central Office. We need ACPS to find a way to hire the best and brightest AND TO KEEP THEM. We need continuity of service when it comes to issues of the safety and security of our students.

If any CBES parent would like to reach out to Mr. Bartlett or Ms. Mignon directly, they can be reached at james.bartlett@acps.k12.va.us and mignon.anthony@acps.k12.va.us. Our Interim Superintendent, Dr. Lois Berlin, has proven to be very receptive to our concerns and incredibly competent – and can be reached at lois.berlin@acps.k12.va.us. You can also reach the ACPS school board at board@acps.k12.va.us.

Last, we are the first PTA to hear directly from Mr. Bartlett on this issue. He did not provide a copy of his presentation, but pointed parents to the [ALICE Institute website](#) for more information. It is intense. He will be speaking at other PTA meetings in the coming months. We will try to get those dates if you would like to hear his presentation in person.

Thank you so much for your attention. It is incredibly inspiring to see so many parents engaging on this issue and coming together to protect our kids.

Best,

The CBES PTA Board