



Americans Against Gun Violence
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2023 National High School Essay Contest \$1,000 Award Winner

A Student Attending High School in Wisconsin

(Other Identifying Information Withheld at Student's Request)

It's Not Funny

Freshman year my school participated in a new strategy for lock downs called ALICE. Alert, listen, inform, counter, evacuate. This is an acronym I should have gone my whole life not knowing, but instead we had to practice it. Each day of the week was designated for one of the letters.

On Monday, along with the other 14 and 15 year-olds around me, I'm lectured on how to alert authorities and others around us that an intruder is in our school. I look around and see kids scrolling on their phones, laughing and talking to each other, while I'm listening intently because I think this matters.

On Tuesday, we practice watching our brand new high tech digital clocks from our classroom, where messages from administration can be displayed. We read messages such as "INTRUDER IS IN THE MATH WING", and we have to decide if we will stay in class and hide or evacuate. Around me I hear giggling and chatting. Nothing about the messages telling us where an intruder is in our building is funny to me.

Wednesday is inform. This day is the easiest, as we just have to see a presentation about how to accurately spread information about what is going on. On this day we also speak about designating certain students to attempt to disarm the intruder, presumably the boys, who still haven't grown to be taller than most of the girls, but they have to be prepared to take down a shooter.

On Thursday, our school police officer dresses in a red padded uniform and invades our classrooms; spaces that should never be threatened. My peers and I have to choose items from our backpacks and around us that would serve as harmful flying weapons. The police officer barges into my Global Studies class, where we are already prepared to tip over tables and have our weapons in our hands. I look around, and it finally seems real to my classmates. This is not funny.

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Finally the week is almost over. On Friday we have to decide as a class to stay and barricade or evacuate, based on the information relayed on our in-class clock display. "INTRUDER IN THE FIELD HOUSE" is displayed while I'm in the language hallway. They're close, but is it too close to escape? We decide to leave but when we slowly walk out the door, as if we weren't attempting to escape an active shooter, we see the cop dressed in red. We failed. We would be dead. That is not funny, yet the kids around me laugh it off and walk back into the classroom.

While I am fighting off tears because the whole concept of this is so sad to me, my peers seem to not even think twice about what is happening. No student ever should have to practice escaping their classroom or need to learn how to break a window.