



Tabletop Exercise: Third Grade Teacher Collapses During Class

A third grader notifies the principal that her teacher collapsed and is unresponsive. What should the next steps be?

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Many who work at hospitals, K-12 schools or colleges understand the importance of regularly testing a campus' emergency plans to enhance safety and security for all. Scenario-based training exercises, often referred to as tabletop exercises, are the perfect way to do just that.

During these exercises, all relevant stakeholders should be brought to the table and presented with real-life emergency scenarios. Each stakeholder should share how they would handle the scenario and a subsequent debriefing should be held to address strengths and weaknesses within those responses.

"We don't want to fail during a real situation — we want to fail during a simulation, a drill or an exercise of some kind so that we can identify our vulnerabilities and decide how we want to prioritize those," says Paul Timm, physical security consultant and Vice President of Facilities Engineering Associates.

To help *Campus Safety* readers "get their feet wet," Guy Bliesner, an analyst for the Idaho Office of School Safety and Security (IOSSS), has provided us with incidents that happened at Idaho schools in the last five years and how the affected schools responded.

Each scenario provides details of the event, along with the real outcome and findings from an after-action report. They are designed to be completed in 10-15 minutes as part of an administrative meeting.

The next scenario is detailed below.

Scenario

- **Day:** Tuesday
- **Time:** 10:26 A.M.
- **Weather:** Overcast with intermittent light rain
- **Temperature:** 63 degrees
- **School type:** Elementary (K-5)
- **Event:** This is a 2-part event:
 - **Part 1:** You are notified by a very upset third grader that their teacher has collapsed in the front of the

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classroom and is unresponsive. **What steps do you take?**

- **Part 2:** The teacher has tragically passed away from a massive heart attack. The body is removed by ambulance. **What steps do you take now?**

How the School Handled the Situation

The principal directed the office manager to call 911 and request an EMS response. The principal and school counselor then immediately proceed to the classroom. As they arrive, the counselor moves the students to the media center. The principal begins CPR and a first aid trained special education teacher arrives to assist.

The secretary notifies the janitor to meet the arriving ambulance and escort them to the classroom. EMS arrives and takes over CPR. A defibrillator is used without success. As EMS prepares to remove the teacher, the principal returns to the office and uses the P.A. system to clear the hallways and restrict all students to their classrooms. EMS removes the teacher and the ambulance leaves the school.

The principal makes a general P.A. announcement to the school indicating that the teacher has been taken by ambulance to the hospital. The superintendent and district office are notified. The school district does not have a crisis team or standard operating procedure (SOP) for an unexpected death.

As a result, the superintendent calls a larger adjacent school district and requests their help. The larger district has a well-defined, unexpected death SOP and an experienced crisis team. With the help of the larger district, the small district develops both an SOP and crisis team post-incident.

After-Action Review Findings

In this case, the AAR determined the incident was well handled but the need for a developed policy and process existed. As a result:

- A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was developed and put in place to continue the relationship with the larger district in a formal fashion
- An internal crisis team was identified and trained

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KCSS Resources

Emergency Guide: <https://kycss.org/emergency-procedures/emergency-guide/>


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