



Ponca City Public Schools Providing ALICE Training Instructor Certification to Ponca City

The PCPS and the ALICE Training Institute teamed up to bring ALICE Training Instructor Certification to Ponca City. The two-day training was held at the Central Administration Building and included participants from many different organizations from Oklahoma and Kansas.

The goal of the ALICE (Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, and Evacuation) program is to provide individuals with proactive, survival-enhancing options for critical moments in the gap between when a violent situation begins and law enforcement arrives on the scene. The national average for police response time is 6-10 minute, which makes the people in the room the first responders!

The ALICE methods are based on ideologies from many governmental entities, and national security organizations concerning shootings from all over the country. Run-Hide-Fight is the premise. The program addresses the fallacies of a one-size-fits-all response plan by explaining the truths of violent intruder/active shooter events. The reality is that that through training and empowerment, citizens can apply the ALICE strategies and improve survival chances.

Discussions about school violence are always uncomfortable. The threat of an active shooter attack is rare but very real. The “It can’t happen to me” mentality must be eradicated, and the way schools, businesses, hospitals, and places of worship etc. respond to armed intruders must change. These events will keep happening, and can happen to anyone, anywhere. Schools and organizations must equip themselves with response options and strategies to participate in their own survival.

Until recently, the United States Department of Education guidelines for active shooter response was limited to lockdown/shelter-in-place, which included students hiding under desks or against walls. These methods were developed during the cold war era to protect people from a nuclear threat. In 2013, the USDA expanded their guidelines to almost exclusively use the ALICE protocols.

The ALICE program is now the leading response program in the United States. It is endorsed by law enforcement across the country and is in line with recommendations from the Department of Homeland Security, FEMA and many other leading state and national agencies. Over 4,200 school districts have been trained with ALICE.

“ALICE training was worth every minute of our time,” said Bret Smith, PCPS Executive Director of Operations. “The two-day training was not just lecture and PowerPoint Presentations, but discussions, drills, scenarios, and presenting to others what we learned in regards to keeping staff and students as safe as we possibly could in the event of an active shooter situation.”

Smith continued, “Matt Schneider, ALICE expert, knew his stuff! As a former police officer, he has the practical experience to be an effective instructor for active shooter education techniques for the ALICE association. We learned not only the methods, but some psychology and factual data associated with school shootings and how to protect ourselves in the event it happens in our world. The ALICE methodology makes perfect sense, but we all know that not everything is perfect, and that every situation

will not be the same. We have a framework of what to do, and now have the means to teach our students and staff the best methods to date, about active shooter scenarios.”

“In the coming months, we will be instructing our staff and students in the ALICE methods. This will help empower our staff to make decisions based on their own situation during an event. It also assists our youth the same way. Of course the instruction will be age appropriate for students, but staff will all utilize the ALICE methods. There will be three of our school employees as qualified instructors while our local police, sheriff, Pioneer Technology Center, and some local churches joining our ranks as instructors. We have great leaders who work as a team for Ponca City and the surrounding areas, and we will all work together as needed.

“It is always best to run or get away from the danger if possible,” explained Smith. “If you are trapped or cannot run from the danger, then hide the best you can, anywhere you can. The last resort is to fight and to use any means possible to stop the intruder and save your own life. Nothing is off base when put into this situation.”

“I applaud our local law enforcement, P66, Pioneer Technology Center, PCPS administration, and churches for stepping up for our community, but especially for our students.”

The afternoon training included active scenarios. The first simulated scenario involved a disgruntled female employee who had gotten fired from her job and could not feed her family. Participants were only allowed to hide, which resulted in all of them being shot. They were sitting ducks!

Instructions for the second scenario were barricade and/or run, but participants were not allowed to fight. Participants covered windows and covered and secured doors by any means possible, which included belts, cables, extension cords etc. tied and leveraged to stacked furniture. Results were much better working as a team, and there were not nearly as many casualties.

Scenario three was full ALICE – run, hide and fight. The simulated shooter entered the door and was immediately tackled by a team of participants who swarmed him. They were very successful in taking him to the ground, and there was only one injury.

The way schools and organizations have trained for these man-made disasters is changing and evolving. The Ponca City Public School district will always be implementing best practices and working collaboratively with local community partners to provide the best and safest environment possible.

Pictured top right – Stacking furniture in front of door: Wesley Bear (Kay County Sheriff Department), Bret Smith (PCPS Executive Director of Operations), Mark Wright, (Douglass Public Schools Unified School District 396),

Pictured top left – Tackling shooter as he entered the door: Sean Tagliatela (PCPS Dean of Students), Eric Welch (Ponca City Police Department), Stephen Johnston (Blackwell First Baptist Church), Wesley Bear (Kay County Sheriff Department), Matt Schneider (ALICE Trainer), Cody Womack (Ponca City Police Department & PCPS Middle School Resource Officer)

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