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Student, staff safety measures enhanced at Gabriel Richard High School



Tracy Richardson, retired local educator and co-founder of School Safety and Compliance, LLC, discusses safety preparedness strategies with staff at Gabriel Richard Catholic High School in Riverview. (Photo courtesy of Gabriel Richard Catholic High School)

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In a day and age where school shootings and threats have become regular occurrences throughout the country, safety measures at Gabriel Richard Catholic High School are being enhanced to lessen those risks.

Gabriel Richard, in partnership with School Safety and Compliance, LLC and the Riverview Police Department, recently announced that the steps they are taking demonstrate the importance of ensuring the safety of everyone at the school.

"Student and staff safety has always been a priority at Gabriel Richard, but it's important for us to periodically revisit our safety protocol and look for ways to enhance the security of our school," said Principal Joseph Whalen. "Each time a school shooting or violent act takes place somewhere, parents call us to ask what we're doing to ensure their child is safe while here. We want them to know that we take their concerns seriously."

These enhancements include a recent on-site ALICE training for staff to learn how to prepare for and respond to violent intruder events.

ALICE (an acronym for Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, Evacuate) is a national training program for schools, businesses and organizations that teaches participants to respond to a violent intruder using options-based strategies.

For example, ALICE teaches staff and students that in some instances, the best action may be to lock a door and hide, while in other circumstances, it may be for students and staff to flee.

Whalen said that although the school routinely practices lockdowns as part of its existing Emergency Operations Plan, the recent ALICE Training is new for staff. The training will be ongoing, and will include an evaluation of current safety procedures.

Tracy Richardson, co-founder and senior consultant with SSC, is working closely with Gabriel Richard as part of a comprehensive program his company offers.

Richardson said each school's program is tailored individually following a risk and security assessment of the school.

Several factors are taken into consideration and recommendations are made accordingly. Richardson is also helping Gabriel Richard try to secure state and federal grant programs to enhance school safety.

