

Admin Attracted to Lockdown Magnets

In the wake of recent events, schools across America have opened their eyes to the realities of gun violence even in our own school district. As of February 2013, Acalanes High School Union School District Administrators searched for possible safety precautions in future lockdowns. As a result, officials turned to lockdown magnets.

The lockdown magnet is a \$5 magnetic strip designed to easily lock doors in case there is an intruder on campus. Faculty members can simply remove the strip to lock the door, rather than step outside and lock the door with the key.

The idea was proposed by Megan Yee, an Acalanes sophomore. Yee got the idea from an interview she had with Chris Dorn, a school safety analyst from Safe Havens International, while writing an article on the Newtown shooting for the Acalanes Blueprint.

“Mr. Dorn briefly mentioned these magnetic strips as being an inexpensive alternative to replacing all the locks in the district with Columbine locks,” Yee said. Columbine locks allow teachers to lock a classroom door from inside, but come with a huge financial concern.

Yee was enlightened by Dorn’s idea. “One of the topics I discussed with him was the fact that the doors at AUHSD campuses only lock from the outside,” Yee explained. “This can create dangerous situations for teachers in the event of an intruder on campus since they would have to open their doors in order to lock them,” Yee said.

Yee approached AUHSD Associate Superintendent of Business Services Chris Learned after discussing her idea with Acalanes Associate Principal Peter Stewart.

"I looked into this right away, and it was a really good idea. What we were originally looking at was the Columbine locks, which allow you to lock the door within a classroom," Learned said.

However, Columbine locks cost at least \$26,000 for one school according to a statement released by San Mateo High School, who implemented the locks in 2008. Prior to the implementation of lockdown magnets, classroom doors were always left unlocked, according to Learned. "If an intruder was on campus, it would require faculty to step outside and lock the door, potentially jeopardizing their own safety," Learned said.

"We wanted to find a way for teachers to lock their classrooms without having to go into the hallway, and to keep the doors permanently locked all the time," Principal Adam Clark said.

The idea of Columbine locks was proposed in response to Sandy Hook. "The quickest reaction for me was to keep the doors locked at all times. But this was a problem for the faculty because if a student is late, then it disrupts the class. That was the solution until Megan told us about the magnets," Learned said.

"I've actually been in schools with locks on the inside, and it's a problem when doors are locked. Each time a kid left to go to the office or bathroom someone would disrupt class by having someone to get up and unlock the door," Clark said.

As a community, administrators are working to combat gun violence in many ways. According to Clark, the answer lies with reducing bullying.

"We want parents, kids and faculty to talk about this, to be aware. Over at Acalanes they simulated having an active shooter on campus. Our district personnel and Acalanes students evacuated the school and the police were there. One thing that this seminar talked about was creating a culture and a climate of individuals who really care about one

another," Clark said.

While Orinda rarely encounters situations that pose a threat to the community, administrators are concerned about the well being of the student body. Clark went on to explain why this concept is incredibly important.

"We can't be silent when something like this happens. We need to provide those whom are having a difficult time with help." One approach Clark recommends is to ensure people are more tolerant, caring and accepting of one another. "We can fence this place in, we can have metal detectors and police dogs; but if you're not kind to one another, or respectful, then we run into problems. We become reactive instead of preventative, when we need to be proactive instead of reactive," Clark said.