



## PRIORITY ONE: Keeping Students Safe



### The Problem: Safely Securing Classrooms

As school shootings continue to occur, determining the best way to keep our nation's schoolchildren safe has become a topic of national debate. The search for solutions has led to the placement of unsafe barricade devices in classrooms, which can lead to potentially dangerous situations like entrapment.

### The Solution: Lock the Door

School security experts know that locking the classroom door is the best way for a teacher to secure the room against an intruder. Classroom doors should have the ability to be locked quickly, without opening the door. Most classroom doors have existing locksets which can prevent unauthorized access to the room.

A lock that was once common and is still present on many existing classroom doors requires the teacher to open the door to lock it with a key from the outside. To mitigate the need for the teacher to open the door and potentially be exposed to danger, these locks can always be kept in the locked position. By closing the door, the room is secure, providing a high level of security at no additional cost. If school administrators would like the ability to lock the door from inside the room, this can often be done with a conversion kit or retrofit which does not require replacement of the lock.

### The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) reports:

Proponents of barricade devices argue that school fires are no longer a threat, and the primary concern is an active-shooter incident. Between 2013 and 2017, US fire departments responded to an estimated average of 3,320 fires in schools each year<sup>5</sup>.

Of the school fires that occurred between 2010 and 2014, automatic extinguishing systems (including sprinklers) were present in 39% of the buildings<sup>6</sup>.

### Barricading Doors vs. Barricade Devices

- A locked classroom door has never been breached through the lock and is the best security plan<sup>4</sup>.
- With a door that does not lock, exiting or barricading the door with furniture is recommended. However,
  - It takes time and strength;
  - It places students and teachers in the line of fire;
  - It inhibits or delays emergency-responder rescues.

### The Damages of Barricade Devices

Barricade devices could be used by an unauthorized person, preventing access to the room by school staff and emergency responders. Dozens of incidents of barricading and hostage situations have occurred in schools. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, in 2017, among students ages 12–18, there were about 827,000 total assaults, rapes and robberies. Barricade devices readily allow an unauthorized person to secure a classroom which can delay or even prevent emergency response while a crime is occurring.

### Safe Evacuations for All Emergencies

Security decisions are often influenced by fear and emotion. While every school shooting is tragic, all potential hazards must be considered when evaluating school security including fires, bomb threats, chemical spills, and extreme weather events. Even during school shooting incidents, fires and explosives are potential threats. At Columbine High School, the assailants planned to use explosives to kill or injure hundreds, but the bombs failed to detonate.<sup>3</sup>

These locks allow quick exits, are tested and listed to ensure that they will perform as required during a fire, and can be operated by all building occupants including school staff, substitute teachers, students, visitors and groups who use the facilities outside of school hours. Conversely, barricade devices require special knowledge and may be unfamiliar to those who need to secure a room. Without a quick, obvious and standardized way to exit a secured room, evacuation proves difficult and first responders will be delayed putting occupants at risk.

# Classroom Locks are the Safety Standard and the Solution

After a school shooting occurs, security and safety protocols are dissected; in some cases, changes are made. However, school administrators who have experienced a shooting continue to choose locksets rather than purchasing classroom barricade devices. Door hardware commonly installed in schools is cost-effective, code-compliant and designed with the safety of students and teachers in mind. There has never been an event in which an active shooter breached the lock of a classroom door. Locking and unlocking a door with standard door hardware is intuitive for most building occupants, and the speed of securing a door or using the hardware to exit can save lives.

## Classroom Locks

**Lock** *n.* A key or systematic hardware-operated mechanism used to secure a door.

### ☒ Allow safe egress

An essential facet of any school security plan is to have a direct way to exit the building to facilitate evacuation. The means to exit through a door must be simple and obvious

### ☒ Allow for faster and safer rescues

A simple key will allow emergency responders to streamline the evacuation of school buildings during a shooting or other types of emergencies.

### ☒ Consider ALL types of emergencies

School districts need to be prepared for all types of emergencies. Statistically, other forms of victimizations are thousands of times more prevalent than school shootings. Students, teachers and administrators need to be protected from assaults, bomb threats, bullying, harassment, fires and severe-weather incidents.

### ☒ Are code approved

Conventional locksets meet the fire, life safety, and accessibility code requirements which allow occupants to exit without obstruction. The codes mandate the hardware operation, mounting height, and means of authorized access, to maximize safety.

### ☒ Are specially developed, tested and certified for classroom installations

The hardware industry has design and performance standards, certification programs, and testing protocols to help assure that the hardware will work properly for years to come.

## Barricade Devices

**bar-ri-cade** *n.* A makeshift barrier or fortification set up across a route of access.

### ☒ Prevent safe, fast and efficient egress

Using a barricade device that blocks the door from the inside can potentially impede or prevent children from successfully leaving the classroom.

### ☒ Impede rescue efforts

Another dangerous threat imposed by barricade devices is that they may prevent access from the outside, so even a staff member or emergency responder with a key would not be able to enter.

### ☒ Allow opportunities for perpetrators to create impenetrable blockades

Unauthorized lockdown of a classroom could help to create a haven for someone attempting to commit a crime: it can create a hostage or captive situation where children are barricaded in a classroom with a perpetrator.

### ☒ May not be code compliant

Most states adopt codes and standards to help ensure the safety of building occupants, and the Americans With Disabilities Act federally protects the rights of people with disabilities. The majority of barricade devices do not comply with the requirements of these codes.

### ☒ Are not independently tested or certified

Standards and testing have not been established for door barricades, so their strength and durability are unknown. Performance issues could lead to serious delays in evacuation.

## Additional School Safety & Security Resources

### Locks:

[Secure Schools Alliance Fact Sheet](#)

[PASS Position on Barricade Devices](#)

[PASS Schools Safety & Security Guidelines](#)

[Classroom Security Considerations Article](#)

[National Association of State Fire Marshals Guidelines](#)

[NASFM 2018 Resolution on Classroom Door Security](#)

[NASFM School Safety Survey Review](#)

[School Liability and the Law of Unintended Consequences](#)

[IBC and IFC Locking Arrangements in educational occupancies](#)

[NFPA 3000 Fact Sheet](#)

[Door Security & Safety Foundation Resources](#)

### Statistics:

[Final Report of the Federal Commission on School Safety](#)

[FBI Active Shooter Incidents in the U.S.](#)

[NCES Indicators of School Crime and Safety](#)

<sup>1</sup>[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/226050904\\_Barricaded\\_Captive\\_Situations\\_in\\_Schools\\_Mitigation\\_and\\_Response](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/226050904_Barricaded_Captive_Situations_in_Schools_Mitigation_and_Response)

<sup>2</sup>[https://nces.ed.gov/programs/crimeindicators/ind\\_02.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/crimeindicators/ind_02.asp)

<sup>3</sup><https://www.history.com/topics/1990s/columbine-high-school-shootings>

<sup>4</sup>[http://www.shac.ct.gov/SHAC\\_Final\\_Report\\_3-6-2015.pdf](http://www.shac.ct.gov/SHAC_Final_Report_3-6-2015.pdf)

<sup>5</sup><https://www.nfpa.org/News-and-Research/Data-research-and-tools/Building-and-Life-Safety/Structure-fires-in-schools>

<sup>6</sup><https://www.nfpa.org/-/media/Files/News-and-Research/Fire-statistics-and-reports/Suppression/ossprinklers.pdf>