"Every second counts: plan two ways out" reinforces the importance of having an escape plan. All classrooms, hallways, stairwells and other school areas should have a school map, highlighted with evacuation routes and protocols. Make sure students understand how to use them.

Nearly 7 in 10 of the fires in educational properties occurred in nursery, elementary, middle, or high schools.

From 2011-2015, U.S. fire departments responded to an estimated annual average of 4,980 structure fires in educational properties.

Drills are an essential component of emergency preparedness. Students must be taught how to respond to a fire well before an actual fire occurs.

If there is a fire, stay calm, drop to the floor, and crawl out using the escape route you practiced with your school. Cover your mouth and nose to keep from breathing in smoke. Once everyone has made it outside to a predetermined location, everyone should remain outside until the Fire Department has cleared the building for re-entry.

Fire drills should be held at least once a month while school is in session. On the day of the fire drill, everyone in the school should participate. Students with specific needs should be assigned an adult or student buddy to assist them. Fire drills are a good opportunity to identify who among the student population requires extra assistance.

Principals, teachers, and other school staff should inspect all exits daily to make sure stairways, doors, and other exit areas are unblocked and working properly. Additionally, all school staff should be familiar with the school’s fire protection system, including the locations of fire alarm pull systems and fire sprinklers.

Use rosters to make sure every student is accounted for.

Sources: National Fire Protection Association, Center for Disease Control, U.S. Fire Administration