Security and Barricade Devices on Classroom Doors

Background
As an alternative to code-compliant locksets, some schools have turned to the use of security and barricade devices to secure classroom doors during lockdowns. However, the use of locks or similar devices that do not meet the minimum requirements of the Minnesota State Fire Code (MSFC) and Minnesota Building Code (MBC) are prohibited, and their use could result in the unintended consequence of creating additional hazards to building occupants.

The State of Minnesota adopts the International Fire Code, a nationally recognized model code published by the International Code Council (ICC). The 2020 MSFC can be viewed online at ICC’s website.

Locking arrangements in educational occupancies (summary)
MSFC Sections 1010.1.4.4 and 1031.2.2
Any locking arrangement applied to an egress door designed to keep intruders from entering the room must comply with the following:

- The door is readily openable from the egress side without the use of a key or special knowledge or effort.
- The door releases from the egress side with a single operation.
- Door operating hardware is mounted between 34 and 48 inches in height above floor level.
- The door is capable of being unlocked from the access side with the use of a key or other approved means to allow immediate access to school officials and emergency responders.
- Modifications shall not be made to listed panic hardware, fire door hardware or door closers.
- Modifications to fire door assemblies shall be in accordance with NFPA 80.

Rationale against the use of door security and barricade devices
An impediment to school officials and first responders
It’s often the case that the perpetrators of violent crime on school grounds are those who already have access to the building. When door security and barricade devices are readily available, which is necessary for them to be employed quickly and effectively, the potential exists for an occupant to use them for malicious purposes by barricading themselves and others within a room or area. Because the vast majority of these devices cannot be unlocked from the access side, law enforcement, firefighters, EMS and school staff would be unable to make rapid entry in order to prevent or stop an assault, extinguish a fire, perform a rescue, or render medical aid.
An impediment to egress

Many door security and barricade devices, once employed, do not allow for rapid egress in the event of an emergency. There may be times during a lockdown condition when the safest action is for occupants is to evacuate. Examples include:

- Where instructions are given by school officials or emergency responders to evacuate.
  - Many active shooter response protocols include building or area evacuation when it’s safe to do so. Non-compliant security and barricade devices could impede egress or increase the time necessary to evacuate.
- Where an assailant has started a fire, set an incendiary device, or released a hazardous material.
- Where an assailant is attempting to access a classroom through a secondary doorway or an exterior window.

Time and performance limitations

The act of locking a code-compliant lockset is a simple process that can be done in seconds. However, door security and barricade devices typically must first be removed from their storage location and then additional time is necessary for installation. Some devices require several steps for installation and may prove difficult under stressful conditions. Although a certain percentage of people are able to effectively perform complex tasks under emergency conditions, this is not the case for everyone. Time is also a critical factor during a lockdown emergency, and the time necessary to employ a security or barricade device may not be available.

Code-compliant options are available

Classroom security function locksets are readily available. These locksets allow the door to be locked by use of a key without the teacher having to enter the corridor. They also allow free egress from the classroom and can be unlocked by school officials and emergency responders. For additional protection, classroom security function mortice locksets with dead-bolt latches are also available.

Organizations that advise against the use of security and barricade devices

Below is a list of organizations that advise against the use of security and barricade devices that don’t comply with adopted building and fire codes.

- A.L.I.C.E. Training Institute – *Barricade vs Door Locking Device - There is a Difference*
- The U.S. Department of Defense – *Physical Security and Antiterrorism Design Guide*
- National Association of State Fire Marshals – *NASFM Classroom Door Security and Locking Hardware Guidance and Checklist*
- Partnership Alliance for Safer Schools – *PASS School Safety and Security Guidelines*