

PODCAST #5 SCHOOL SHOOTINGS

WELCOME TO VIEWS AND VOICE: ABOVE THE NOISE, THE PODCAST HOSTED BY MASA, MN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS. I AM JANE SIGFORD, YOUR CONVENER.

TODAY'S TOPIC IS ABOUT SCHOOL SHOOTINGS. WE HAVE HAD SEVERAL RECENTLY THAT HAVE NOT ONLY MADE THE FRONT PAGES, BUT HAVE SPURRED STUDENT WALK-OUTS, AND PROTESTS IN MINNESOTA AND ACROSS THE NATION, AND IN WASHINGTON D.C. THAT ARE REMINISCENT OF THE CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE OF THE 1960S.

* THE MARCHES THAT OCCURRED ON ~~MARCH 24, 2018~~, ACROSS THE NATION WERE A REAL MESSAGE. FIRST OF ALL, THE VOICE OF YOUNG PEOPLE ROSE TO CHALLENGE CURRENT PRACTICES WHICH MAKES ME THINK SCHOOLS HAVE BEEN INSTRUMENTAL IN TEACHING THE RIGHTS OF CITIZENS IN A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY. THIS WAS TRUE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT. A MINNEAPOLIS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT, BEN JAEGER, IS QUOTED AS SAYING "WE MUST DEMAND A SAFER STATE AND A SAFER NATION. WE THE STUDENTS AND WE THE YOUTH, ARE THE FUTURE." STRIB, MARCH 25, 2018.

I HAD STARTED
*WRITING THIS PODCAST BEFORE THE BIG MARCH ~~ON THE 24TH~~ BUT THE ARTICLES IN THE PAPER WERE VERY TIMELY.

WHEN I GOOGLED SCHOOL SHOOTINGS FOR RESEARCH, I FOUND THAT THAT TOPIC WOULD BE A PERFECT EXERCISE TO USE TO TEACH PEOPLE THE NEED TO CHECK THE VALIDITY OF SOURCES, TO REALIZE THAT MANY THINGS THAT ARE PRINTED ARE FROM ONE VIEWPOINT AND MAY NOT BE ACCURATE, AND THAT COMPLICATED ISSUES ARE COMPLICATED TO WRITE ABOUT. THE POLEMICS AND EMOTIONALITY AROUND THE ISSUE WHEN ONE GOOGLES THAT TOPIC ARE AMAZING. THE SENSATIONALISM AND POLITICS BEHIND THE TOPIC HIGHLIGHTS THE NEED FOR RATIONAL AND SYSTEMATIC THINKING. I WAS LOOKING FOR ANSWERS AND, NO SURPRISE, I FOUND MORE QUESTIONS THAN ANSWERS. I DID LEARN, HOWEVER, AND I'D LIKE TO SHARE WITH YOU.

SOME BACKGROUND DATA

DID YOU KNOW THAT; (THESE NUMBERS ARE FROM WIKIPEDIA.)

- THE FIRST SCHOOL MASSACRE IN THE U.S. HAPPENED IN 1764 WHEN SOME LENAPE AMERICAN INDIANS ATTACKED A SCHOOL, SHOOTING

THE TEACHER, AND NINE STUDENTS WHO WERE KILLED WITH OTHER WEAPONS, NOT GUNS.

- THERE WERE 37 SCHOOL SHOOTINGS IN THE 1800S, (19TH CENTURY) INCLUDING ONE IN ST. PAUL IN 1878 WHERE A 12 YEAR OLD BOY SHOT ANOTHER STUDENT ACCIDENTALLY. THE BULLET PASSED THROUGH AND THE MOTHER DID NOT PRESS CHARGES
- IN THE 20TH CENTURY THERE WERE 235 SCHOOL SHOOTINGS INCLUDING ONE IN BLAINE, MINNESOTA, IN 1960 WHERE A MAIL CARRIER SHOT THE PRINCIPAL WITH A SHOTGUN.
- SO FAR IN THE 21ST CENTURY WE HAVE HAD 219 SCHOOL SHOOTINGS, 2 OF WHICH WERE IN MINNESOTA—COLD SPRING IN 2003 AND RED LAKE IN 2005.
- WE HAVE HAD 57 SHOOTINGS NATIONWIDE SINCE 2015. THAT'S AN AVERAGE OF A LITTLE OVER 19 A YEAR.
- ELEVEN SCHOOLS SINCE COLUMBINE IN 1999 HAVE HAD MASS SHOOTINGS.
- THERE ARE NOT NECESSARILY MORE SHOOTINGS BUT THEY HAVE BECOME MORE DEADLY. SCHOOLS HAVE BEEN THE SITE OF THE DEADLIEST SHOOTINGS IN THE U.S.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_school_shootings_in_the_United_States#18th_century

THE PARAMETERS OF THE DATA CITED ON WIKIPEDIA ARE:

- IF A FIREARM IS DISCHARGED AT A SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE OR CAMPUS, INCLUDING THE BUS.
- K-12 PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS AND COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITIES.
- DOES NOT INCLUDE SUICIDE ATTEMPTS BY ONE PERSON OR SHOOTINGS OF ADULTS TO ADULTS.

OTHER SOURCES MAY USE SOME DIFFERENT CRITERIA. FOR EXAMPLE EDUCATION WEEK IS TRYING TO COMPILE ACCURATE DATA SO THAT PEOPLE CAN MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS ABOUT THIS ISSUE.

THEIR PARAMETERS ARE:

- IF A FIREARM WAS DISCHARGED
- ON SCHOOL PROPERTY OR ON A SCHOOL BUS
- IF IT OCCURRED WHILE SCHOOL WAS IN SESSION OR DURING A SCHOOL-SPONSORED EVENT
- IF IT RESULTED IN INJURY OR DEATH TO INDIVIDUALS WHO WERE NOT THE SUSPECT OR PERPETRATOR.

<https://www.edweek.org/ew/section/multimedia/school-shootings-this-year-how-many-and-where.html>

ED WEEK HAS EVEN PUBLISHED A MAP WITH THE LOCATIONS OF THE SCHOOL SHOOTINGS SO FAR THIS YEAR IN THE U.S. SITES ARE IN THE OUTER RINGS OF THE US: CALIFORNIA, TEXAS, KENTUCKY, ALABAMA, FLORIDA, PENNSYLVANIA, AND MARYLAND. BUT THERE HAVE BEEN SHOOTINGS THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES. NONE OF US ARE EXEMPT.

<https://www.edweek.org/ew/section/multimedia/school-shootings-this-year-how-many-and-where.html>

ANOTHER SOURCE I UTILIZED WAS BBC, AS A THEORETICALLY UNBIASED NEWS SOURCE. IN ADDITION, THEY PROVIDE AN INTERNATIONAL VIEWPOINT, APART FROM THE EMOTIONALITY AND POLEMICS OF THE AMERICAN PRESS.

BBC EVEN INCORPORATED AN ANALYSIS BY OUR OWN FBI THAT SHOWED THAT "SHOOTERS WERE HIGHLY LIKELY TO BE MALE AND ACTING ALONE." AND THAT "PLACES OF EDUCATION WERE AMONG THE MOST FREQUENT LOCATIONS FOR SHOOTINGS WITH MULTIPLE CASUALTIES.

<http://www.bbc.com/news/business-43060002>

WHAT CAN BE DONE ABOUT SCHOOL SHOOTINGS?

THE OPINION OF WHAT TO DO VARIES BY STATE. A PEW RESEARCH STUDY SHOWED THAT 45% OF ADULTS WERE IN FAVOR OF ARMING TEACHERS AND SCHOOL STAFF.

<http://www.bbc.com/news/business-43060002>

IN OHIO INDIVIDUAL SCHOOLS ARE ALLOWED TO DECIDE HOW STAFF CAN PROTECT THEMSELVES. JOE EATON, FOR EXAMPLE, IS A MANAGER OF A FIRM IN OHIO THAT TRAINS TEACHERS HOW TO USE WEAPONS IF THERE IS AN ATTACK.

ED WEEK HAS ALSO PUBLISHED FIVE CRITICAL QUESTIONS FOR US TO CONSIDER AROUND SHOOTINGS:

1. WHAT COUNTS AS A SCHOOL SHOOTING?, ED WEEK IS TRYING TO DELIMIT THE PARAMETERS AROUND WHAT CONSTITUTES A SHOOTING AS DESCRIBED ABOVE.
2. ARE SCHOOL SHOOTINGS BECOMING MORE COMMON? EXPERTS SAY THEY ARE NOT; HOWEVER, THEY ARE BECOMING MORE DEADLY. THREE OF THE DEADLIEST MASS SHOOTINGS IN U.S. HISTORY HAVE

HAPPENED IN THE LAST YEAR. SOME GOOD NEWS IS THAT OTHER STUDENT VICTIMIZATIONS ARE ON A DOWNWARD TREND, AND FEWER STUDENTS REPORT A FEAR OF HARM THAN IN PREVIOUS YEAR, MOST RECENT FEDERAL DATA SHOW.

<https://www.edweek.org/ew/issues/school-shootings/index.html>

3. DO SCHOOL SHOOTERS FIT A SPECIFIC PROFILE?
SCHOOL SAFETY EXPERTS SAY THAT ATTACKERS ARE FROM ALL RACES, AGES, DISCIPLINARY HISTORIES, AND FAMILY BACKGROUNDS. SCHOOLS SHOULD TAKE ALL THREATS SERIOUSLY. HOWEVER, THERE MAY BE COMMON PSYCHOLOGICAL TRENDS AMONG ATTACKERS. MANY "FELT BULLIED, PERSECUTED, OR INJURED BY OTHERS PRIOR TO THE ATTACK. MANY HAD A HISTORY OF SUICIDE ATTEMPTS OR FEELINGS OF DEPRESSION OR DESPERATION, AND MOST HAD NO HISTORY OF CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR".

<https://www.edweek.org/ew/issues/school-shootings/index.html>

SUSPECTS ARE PREDOMINANTLY MALE. WHY? EXPERTS SAY IT'S BECAUSE VIOLENCE IS PREDOMINANTLY A MALE PHENOMENON. IN "RAMPAGE SHOOTINGS" PERPETRATORS OFTEN HAVE A SENSE OF "DAMAGED MASCULINITY" WHICH IS DEFINED AS A SENSE OF FAILURE OR INADEQUACY IN PARTS OF THEIR LIFE THAT THEY LINKED TO MALE IDENTITY, SUCH AS SEXUALITY OR PHYSICAL STRENGTH.

4. WHAT CAN BE DONE TO PREVENT SCHOOL SHOOTINGS?
PSYCHOLOGISTS SAY IT IS RARE THAT A PERSON "JUST SNAPS". U.S. SECRET SERVICE REPORTED THAT IN 31 OF 37 ANALYZED SHOOTING INCIDENTS, THE SHOOTER HAD TOLD AT LEAST ONE PERSON ABOUT THEIR PLANS BEFOREHAND. IN 22 CASES TWO OR MORE PEOPLE KNEW ABOUT THE PLANNED ATTACK IN ADVANCE. IN NEARLY ALL CASES, THOSE PEERS WERE CLASSMATES, SIBLINGS, AND FRIENDS OF THE ATTACKERS.

WHAT TO DO? PSYCHOLOGISTS ADVISE CREATION OF A SYSTEM OF ADVANCED ANONYMOUS REPORTING. PLUS, WE CAN CREATE A SYSTEM OF CONSISTENT, RELIABLE "REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO CONCERNS ABOUT STUDENTS' INTENTIONS."

5. ARE GUNS THE ONLY THREATS?
NO. IN 2014 A 16 YEAR OLD BOY INJURED 21 STUDENTS AND A SCHOOL SAFETY OFFICER WITH A KNIFE. THE DEADLIEST SCHOOL

ATTACK IN U.S. HISTORY WAS IN 1927 WHEN 200 LBS OF DYNAMITE KILLED 45 PEOPLE, INCLUDING 38 CHILDREN AND THE ATTACKER.

HOWEVER, IN MY OPINION, AND IT IS MINE, IS THAT GUN VIOLENCE IS A MORE POPULAR MODE OF VIOLENCE IN OUR CULTURE THAN KNIVES OR EXPLOSIVES.

UNDER THIS HEADING OF 'WHAT CAN BE DONE TO PREVENT THE NEXT SCHOOL SHOOTING, I DISCOVERED AN ITEM FROM NATIONAL PUBLIC RADIO—NPR. WITH THE HELP OF MANY PEOPLE ACROSS THE NATION, MATTHEW MAYER, PROFESSOR AT RUTGERS GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION AND SHANE JIMERSON, PROFESSOR AT UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA IN SANTA BARBARA WHO ARE BOTH SPECIALISTS IN THE STUDY OF SCHOOL VIOLENCE, CREATED A DOCUMENT, A "CALL FOR ACTION TO PREVENT GUN VIOLENCE IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA"
<https://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2018/03/07/590877717/experts-say-here-s-how-to-prevent-the-next-school-shooting>

THEY CALLED FOR A CHANGE IN MINDSET AND POLICY FROM REACTION TO PROACTION. PREVENTION IS MORE THAN THE SECURITY OF MORE METAL DETECTORS OR LOCKED DOORS. SIMPLY STATED PREPARING FOR SHOOTINGS IS "INSUFFICIENT." THEIR APPROACH WAS ONE OF PUBLIC HEALTH.

THEY PROPOSED THREE LEVELS OF WORK:

FIRST LEVEL OF PREVENTION IS A UNIVERSAL APPROACH TO PROMOTING SAFETY AND WELL-BEING FOR EVERYONE .

- THERE NEEDS TO BE ASSESSMENTS SO THAT SCHOOLS ARE SAFE—FREE FROM BULLYING, DISCRIMINATION, HARASSMENT, AND ASSAULT.
- ALSO, A BAN ON ASSAULT-STYLE WEAPONS, HIGH-CAPACITY AMMUNITION CLIPS AND PRODUCTS SUCH AS "STOCK BUMPS" THAT MAKE SEMI-AUTOMATIC FIREARMS TO FUNCTION LIKE AUTOMATIC.

SECOND LEVEL: WHICH ARE PRACTICES TO REDUCE RISK AND PROMOTE PROTECTIVE FACTORS FOR PERSONS EXPERIENCING DIFFICULTIES,

- TO THAT, WE NEED ADEQUATE STAFFING, SUCH AS COUNSELORS, SOCIAL WORKERS AND COMMUNITY- BASED SERVICES TO COORDINATE SCHOOL-AND COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICES

- SCHOOLS SHOULD REFORM SCHOOL DISCIPLINE TO REDUCE EXCLUSIONARY PRACTICES AND FOSTER POSITIVE SOCIAL, BEHAVIORAL, EMOTIONAL, AND ACADEMIC SUCCESS FOR ALL.
- INSTITUTE UNIVERSAL BACKGROUND CHECKS TO SCREEN OUT VIOLENT OFFENDERS, PERSONS WHO HAVE BEEN HOSPITALIZED FOR VIOLENCE TOWARDS SELF OR OTHERS, AND PERSONS ON NO-FLY, TERRORIST WATCH LISTS.

TO ACCOMPLISH THIS, THERE NEEDS TO BE A NATIONAL PROGRAM TO TRAIN AND MAINTAIN SCHOOL-AND-COMMUNITY BASED THREAT ASSESSMENT TEAMS THAT INCLUDE MENTAL HEALTH AND LAW ENFORCEMENT PARTNERS.

THE THIRD LEVEL IS ONE OF INTERVENTIONS FOR INDIVIDUALS WHERE VIOLENCE IS PRESENT OR APPEARS IMMINENT.

- WE NEED A NATIONAL PROGRAM TO TRAIN AND MAINTAIN SCHOOL-AND COMMUNITY-BASED THREAT ASSESSMENT TEAMS THAT INCLUDE MENTAL HEALTH AND LAW ENFORCEMENT PARTNERS. THREAT ASSESSMENT PROGRAMS SHOULD INCLUDE PRACTICAL CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION FOR PERSONS TO REPORT POTENTIAL THREATS AS WELL AS INTERVENTIONS TO RESOLVE CONFLICTS AND ASSIST TROUBLED INDIVIDUALS;
- REMOVE LEGAL BARRIERS TO SHARING SAFETY-RELATED INFORMATION AMONG EDUCATIONAL, MENTAL HEALTH, AND LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES
- HAVE LAWS ESTABLISHING GUN VIOLENCE PROTECTION ORDERS THAT ALLOW COURTS TO ISSUE TIME-LIMITED RESTRAINING ORDERS REQUIRING THAT FIREARMS BE RECOVERED BY LAW ENFORCEMENT WHEN THERE IS EVIDENCE THAT AN INDIVIDUAL IS PLANNING TO CARRY OUT ACTS AGAINST OTHERS OR THEMSELVES.

THE REPORT CONTINUES TO PRESS FOR CONGRESS AND THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH TO REMOVE BARRIERS TO GUN VIOLENCE RESEARCH AND INSTITUTE A PROGRAM OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH ON THE TOPIC. THE AUTHORS CONTEND THAT WELL-EXECUTED LAWS CAN [UNDERLINING AND EMPHASIS IS MINE] REDUCE GUN VIOLENCE WHILE PROTECTING ALL CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS.

THE AUTHORS FEEL THAT IT IS TIME FOR FEDERAL AND STATE AUTHORITIES TO TAKE IMMEDIATE ACTION TO ENACT THESE PROPOSALS

AND PROVIDE ADEQUATE RESOURCES FOR EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION. THEY ASKED FOR ALL PARENTS AND YOUTH TO JOIN IN TO ADVOCATE FOR THESE CHANGES. THE AUTHORS SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED BY THE *SHOWING OF STUDENTS AND ADULTS ON ~~SATURDAY, MARCH 24, 2018,~~ WHERE THE HEADLINES OF STRIB IN THE SUNDAY PAPER WERE "LET'S MAKE SOME HISTORY." .
[HTTPS://CURRY.VIRGINIA.EDU/PREVENT-GUN-VIOLENCE](https://curry.virginia.edu/prevent-gun-violence)

FOR US, AS EDUCATORS: WHAT ARE THE ISSUES

1. TOO MANY PEOPLE DIE IN SCHOOL SHOOTINGS.
2. GUNS ARE MORE COMMON WEAPONS THAN OTHER VIOLENT MEANS
3. HOW DO WE PROTECT OUR CHILDREN?
4. WHAT CAN WE DO?
5. HOW DO WE START?
6. DOES MINNESOTA HAVE A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR DEALING WITH SCHOOL SHOOTINGS?
7. DO MINNESOTA SCHOOLS HAVE A UNIFIED APPROACH TO PREVENTION?
8. SHOULD WE HAVE?
9. CAN WE CREATE A PUBLIC HEALTH APPROACH TO SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS TO INCORPORATE A COMMUNITY-BASED PROGRAM THAT BUILDS IN PREVENTION, AND PROACTION?

THESE ARE BIG QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS.

I MUST SAY THIS WAS A DIFFICULT PODCAST TO RESEARCH AND WRITE. AS AN EDUCATOR, I NEVER DREAMED I WOULD BE DEALING WITH SUCH ISSUES. I HAVE ALWAYS FELT MORE LIKE PARKER PALMER IN HIS BOOK COURAGE TO TEACH WHO STARTED HIS BOOK WITH "I AM A TEACHER AT HEART, AND THERE ARE MOMENTS IN THE CLASSROOM WHEN I CAN HARDLY HOLD THE JOY."

WE ALL, I THINK, WANTED TO BE EDUCATORS TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE, TO HELP OUR STUDENTS GROW AND LIVE HAPPY, SUCCESSFUL LIVES. INSTEAD OF DEALING WITH ISSUES OF LEARNING AND TEACHING, WE ARE DEALING WITH A BASIC HUMAN NEED OF SAFETY.

WHAT'S OUR NEXT STEP? IDEAS? PLEASE FEEL FREE TO EMAIL ME AT JLSIGFORD@COMCAST.NET OR LEAVE A MESSAGE ON THE MASA WEBSITE.

I LEAVE YOU WITH WORDS FROM MY FRIEND, DR. SEUSS: "YOU HAVE BRAINS IN YOUR HEAD. YOU HAVE FEET IN YOUR SHOES. YOU CAN STEER YOURSELF ANY DIRECTION YOU CHOOSE. YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN. AND YOU KNOW WHAT YOU KNOW. AND YOU ARE THE ONE WHO'LL DECIDE WHERE TO GO..."

THANKS FOR LISTENING.