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A Year Without Change: School Shootings in the United States

Jacqueline Maciel, Copy Chief

Two years after mandates and shutdowns, the U.S. has started to see a glimpse of what our past appeared to be, yet the single silver lining students were given has disappeared concurrently. For the first time in decades, the U.S. went a year without recording a single mass school shooting since students were away from the premises. A pandemic that forced all people to stay home for health is what it took for the nation to assure students their safety in a place of education—by taking them out of that very place.

To go back to the country we were comes hand-in-hand with the acknowledgment of the numbing truth we have accepted as our reality—one where we train our children through

lockdown drills on how to protect themselves in case their school becomes a new number added to the list. In 2022 alone, EducationWeek has recorded 14 school shootings that have resulted in a total of 28 deaths and injuries. This leaves a question about why education systems nationwide have not done more during their year break of shootings to combat this portion of the ongoing gun violence epidemic in the U.S.

Talking to The74, Kenneth Trump, an emergency planning advisor for school districts, shared his observations on the return of violence at schools.

“[School leaders have been] tunnel-vision focused on COVID-19 and have done very little, if anything, to dust off their traditional school emergency preparedness guidelines,” Trump said.

There is a growing rise in voices throughout the U.S. expressing their exhaustion of having to hear ‘thoughts and prayers’ rather than witnessing real change occur. Last February marked the fourth anniversary of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting, which became one of the top five deadliest school shootings to occur in American history. Rising from their pain to create a movement, survivors were beginning to set the tone of change in holding high officials and politicians accountable in allowing gun violence to continue on a steady incline at the cost of innocent lives.

The influence that rose from March For Our Lives can still be seen today as it has continuously empowered students of all ages, even after a year-long break. Entering her senior year of high school, VEDIK Jawa shared her opinions with The Atlantic in an op-ed titled, “I’m Not Afraid of COVID-19. I’m Afraid of School Shootings.”

“Fear isn’t driven by statistics. It’s an emotion driven by control. We can control, to a significant degree, our exposure to the coronavirus. We can wear masks; we can social distance; we can get vaccinated,” Jawa said. “But there is nothing students can do to protect ourselves from a school shooting. The responsibility for this danger lies solely in the hands of our government.”



The truth is, the “School Shooting Generation,” who account for 20% of the American population, has grown up enduring the traumatizing truth behind the seriousness of active shooter drills. If there are no modifications to the lack of gun control the U.S. currently has, this trend will only continue. The work of advocates will go unseen and those who have died at the hands of a gun-violence will be gone without regard.

Teachers, including Stacy Olsen from Seaholm High School, Mich., have expressed the need for more training. Speaking to PBS, Olsen stated that the one-day in-service training and lecture is simply not enough to protect herself or students from the potential dangers that could unfold.

While the epidemic of gun violence throughout the country cannot be solved overnight, more needs to be done than banning backpacks, canceling classes and installing police officers around the perimeters of campuses. The practice of threat assessments and crisis response systems have sparked conversations as the next step in combating gun violence on school campuses.

Threat assessments are a set of strategies and procedures to help identify potential threats and the likelihood of their occurrences. Adopting this model in all school districts allows for a reaffirmation in the voices of those who hold concerns about peers, yet maybe unaware or apprehensive in speaking out.

In addition to this, there must be revisions in the tools students use to seek help, whether that be for themselves or classmates. Schools across the nation must be willing to listen to their students about what they need from counselors, social workers and resources to feel comfortable in sharing their concerns. Breaking the stigma of school officials retaliating to each concern with punishment, whether that be at school or legal level, allows for another degree of safety in schools.

Resisting the acceptance of the numbing reality of school shootings the U.S. will not be altered overnight. There must be actions in taking the small steps to no longer allow for young, innocent lives to be cut short as a result of the lack of gun control in the country. We owe past, present and future generations of students the fight towards preventive measures in hopes that the inevitability of school shootings becomes less frequent and the fear of being next is diminished into a moment of history that is only learned and not repeated.