

School Safety Is Everyone's Responsibility

April 10, 2018

To The Editor:

Jennifer Young's March 19 online Commentary "[The Case for Limiting School Security](#)," is incomplete and inaccurate. Sandy Hook Elementary School was not equipped with visual surveillance equipment, and we had one system for entry: a locked front door with buzz-in capability. Training was minimal, and for substitute teachers, nonexistent. Our attacker did not fire on a lock to enter, he broke unprotected window glass. There was no secure vestibule or front-office area to prevent further access. The school's safety systems were not fully functioning, and teachers could not safely lock doors. On his way to Sandy Hook, where police vehicles rarely visited, our attacker passed by two Newtown schools with school resource officers and a police vehicle parked outside.

For safer schools, empathy and security aren't either/or choices. We need both. School safety is a three-legged stool comprised of: people (students, teachers, staff, community members), place (building and campus), and practices/policies (routines and rules supporting safe activities). A proactive, comprehensive, developmentally appropriate approach to school safety doesn't conflate schools with prisons. Instead of instilling "fear, distrust, paranoia," talking about safety fosters meaningful change.

Security and surveillance systems aren't PR tactics, but part of a holistic solution. If prevention fails, schools need to recognize and respond to threats. Swapping technology for empathy is too simplistic because every school is different. There is no one-size-fits-all solution to the array of threats facing schools.

The STOP School Violence Act of 2018 answers a long-overdue need for funding addressing infrastructure, evidence-based education, training, support, and 21st-century technology. These much-needed resources will help communities prevent, not incite violence. While we don't agree with the points in Young's essay, we are glad people are joining the conversation.

School safety isn't one person's responsibility, it is everyone's responsibility.

Michele Gay and Alissa Parker

Co-Founders

Safe And Sound Schools

Newtown, Connecticut

ARTICLE TOOLS


 [Printer-Friendly](#)

 [Email Article](#)

 [Reprints](#)

 [Comments](#)

 [Tweet](#)

 [Share 1](#)