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School Shootings: What's the Plan?

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School Shootings: What's the Plan?

by

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DEDICATION

I dedicate my capstone to my family. I am so appreciative to have a loving, supportive and caring family that has supported me through this journey. My children and husband have supported and encouraged me to continue to find the light at the end of the tunnel. Without my family, I would not be where I am now, and I am very grateful and blessed. My husband and my children never left my side through this challenging journey.

I dedicate this long journey to my Heavenly Father that provided me with the strength, courage, wisdom, patience to get to the end with his blessings. Throughout my entire journey in this program, he never left my side.

Table of Contents

Abstract	4
Chapter 1: Introduction	5
Background	7
Statement of the Problem	11
School Shooting History.....	13
Conclusion	18
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature	18
Ethical Lens View.....	18
Legal and Legislative Lens View.....	31
Conclusion	40
Chapter 3: Preventions, Recommendations, and Conclusions	41
Preventions	41
Recommendations	41
Conclusion	41
References	45

Abstract

The purpose of this research review was to gather the information that will help make changes with evidence-based approaches to help prevent and intervene with these horrendous crimes that have impacted the United States. Inspired by students' and staff member's outcries, these tragic events that attack the most innocent victims must be taken into complete consideration to guarantee their safety. This research review explores the concerns and issues as they relate to policies, code of ethics, strategies, safety planning, and training that have proven to work in preventing any future attacks. States and school officials have implemented programs, security measures, and mental health personnel to help prevent and intervene with these attacks. Another focus has been on gun violence, youths are no longer using guns for recreational purposes, youths are using guns to harm people. The American people request more gun control in our country, citizens are expressing their opinions, and thoughts on what can help with controlling gun violence in school shootings. Relying on evidence-based approaches and taking school security measures seriously has helped in developing policies and procedures that help keep schools safe and maintain a positive school climate as well as a culture that will improve school achievement.

Key Words: prevention and intervention, security measures, school safety, ethical principles, mental health, resources

Chapter 1: Introduction

What is affecting our youth? Are youth lost in our world? Do we hear outcries? Why are they angry? Do they want revenge for being a victim of bullying? Why are they hurting? Why do youths have so much hate?

School shootings have affected our country and have increased in recent years dating back to the 1700s in which some child, teacher, or staff member was shot or killed. This research address the issues and concerns in school shootings. “The FBI defines an active shooter as one or more individuals engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a populated area” (United States Government Accountability Office, 2020). Research has found that evidence-based approaches such as prevention, practice intervention, and treatments have helped victims of school shootings recover. School leaders and communities can help build community resilience to help victims recover from these types of incidents. These incidents have continued to damage and affect the American people, although these horrendous incidents will not end there is hope in helping victims rebuild their strength and courage. According to Statista Research Department, “As of December 2020, there were 112 school shootings in the United States. 2019 had the highest number of school shootings since 1970, with 118” (2021, p. 1). These horrific incidents have taken innocent lives in elementary schools, middle schools, high schools, and college campuses. "The earliest known school shooting in the United States took place in 1764 and was known as the Pontiac Rebellion School Massacre; out of 13 children enrolled in the school, only three survived" (Dixon, 2005, as cited in Paolini, 2015, p. 1). This validates that school shooting incidents have been occurring for centuries and these horrifying incidents continue to affect and harm the American people. “During the 19th century, there were 49 K–12 school shootings, 207 K–12 school shootings nationwide throughout the 20th century, and since 2000 there have been

152 K–12 school shootings” (K12 Academics, n.d., as cited in Paolini, 2015, p. 1). In the first segment of the 21st century, 13 school shootings that fit our criteria, occurred in the United States (Katsiyannis, et al, 2018, p. 2565). We are in the 21st century and our country continues to suffer from shocking massacres that take the lives of our loved ones.

The obstacles to overcome include convincing superintendents, and administrators how important and beneficial it is to be prepared and to have crisis response plans for any active shooter or school shooting situation. Another obstacle is staff and educators are not willing to take part in any planning or preparing for these types of incidents because of traumatic and damaging training offered by some school districts in the past. "As school ramp up active shooter drills, some training tactics-especially those meant to simulate real-life scenarios are doing more harm than good, educators and safety experts say" (Blad & Will, 2019, p. 4). These drills become part of professional development to ensure all staff members receive the training to prepare them for any incidents. Offering training that is carefully planned promptly will make a difference in all that will take part. Ensuring that no policies, procedures, or protocol are violated will be a priority. Reeves, a psychologist "recommends that school districts design active-shooter training with multidisciplinary team that includes administrators, school psychologist, and counselors, school resource officers, and legal staff" (Blad & Will, 2019, p. 9). Planning, preparing, and presenting will be the focus to overcome these obstacles to communicate the message of how important, and valuable planning, and preparing, is for the school shooting situation.

The challenge will be to impact superintendents and administrators by locating case studies, research that has helped overcome the existing mistakes in school shooting planning. This will help to change and update any policies and procedures that schools currently have in place. Change is possible by focusing on the administrators’ mindset that a perfect world does

not exist in schools; what does exist is a realistic world where our dreams have been shattered. Being able to change how we prepare and plan for these types of incidents, will have a positive effect on students, parents, and staff. Currently, standard procedures for schools are school lockdown drills. “Schools that are under a real attack or the threat of violence go on lockdown, an emergency procedure in which students and teachers lock doors, draw shades, and put other security procedures in place” (Brunilda, 2019, p. 4). When implementing existing or new safety drills we do not want to hurt or terrify our children, our goal is to keep them safe. These drills and other drills have proven to work and have helped students feel safer in their schools. Practicing risky drills is not the goal. The goal is to practice drills that will build student muscle memory and ensure the safety of all.

Background

This research review is for school districts to ensure the safety of all students, administrators, and staff members who should not fear while attending work or school. “Our goal is that no child will ever feel afraid at school and no Texas family will ever experience the grief that followed the horrible school shooting at Santa Fe High School,” Patrick said. Politicians have been working around the clock to ensure the safety of children and staff members in schools. “The safety of our children remains paramount — the future of Texas depends on it.” (The Texas Tribune, 2019). The politicians in the State of Texas following the Santa Fe school shooting incident focused on what could be done to help prevent this violence from happening in Texas schools. According to CNN news, “a teenager used a shotgun and a .38 revolver that killed 10 people and wounded 10 others not far from Houston” (Hanna, et al., 2018, p. 1). States and governments are aggressively taking action to enact more safety laws, however, are these laws making a difference, or will the laws fail again? Are we paying close attention or

communicating the outcries from youth? Many factors can contribute to why these youths end up taking such gruesome actions towards others committing these horrible crimes.

Youth violence continues to be one of the most dangerous crimes American people continue to face in our communities. “More than 26,000 children 0 to 17 years old were killed by firearms in the United States between 1999 and 2017, making firearms injuries the third leading cause of death among American children” (Rees et al, 2019, p. 1). Research has shown that communities, schools, government, and other resources have proven that working together can help prevent violence in our schools. Being able to identify troubled youths that need help can help reduce school shooting incidents. School personnel must not only focus on delinquent youths, the focus should be on all students regardless if they are not known to cause any issues. Being able to pay attention, identify warning signs, communicate, plan and take action to identify any threats will help to intervene and prevent any future incidents.

Gun violence is believed to be another factor that has been affected by school shootings. Many youths have easy access to guns in our country. Efforts to end gun violence must focus on accessibility and prevention to make our homes safe again. The issue is that many youths have access to guns through family members, friends, or acquaintances. "More research is needed on youths' prevention and behaviors as potential consumers of handguns, and how those perceptions and behaviors are affected by contextual factor such as state regulations over gun sales, law enforcement practices directed at deterring youth acquisition and carrying of guns, and street outreach prevention programs” (Bushman et al, 2016, p. 36). In efforts to prevent school shootings, The Gun-Free Act signed by President Bill Clinton was passed in 1994 to help with gun laws against students who bring firearms to schools. This was a law that went into effect and is known as “the assault weapon ban” (Gray, 2019, p. 4) “The provisions of the bill outlawed

the ability to “manufacture, transfer, or possess a semiautomatic assault weapon,” unless it was “lawfully possessed under Federal law on the date of the enactment of this subsection” (Gray, 2019, p.4). This act was also known as the “three-strikes” process that required life sentences if criminals were convicted on violent felony crimes after having two or more prior convictions, that included drug crimes. This Act was passed in 1994 and politicians continue to make

School shootings are most commonly committed by a current or former student or by an intruder that is familiar with school procedures and the layout of the school. Staff members must communicate students at risk and their behaviors. Behavior problems may arise from what the child has experienced at home or school. It is important to pay attention to any signs of change and help the child talk about what is affecting them. Problems that have arisen affecting schools in the past include that information is not shared with other staff members. This results in a lack of communication and a crisis. It has been shown in different studies researched that many of the shooters involved had been bullied, harassed, or threatened by their peers. School personnel too often accept and do not take the action needed to stop the bullying suffered by students; therefore many youths are damaged. It is believed that having no close relationships with family and post-traumatic incidents can also affect an individual and it will become a risk factor. Most shooters have little or no relationship with parents, come from a dysfunctional home, or are unhappy with themselves. Today some administrators are trying to implement programs and environments that will help students feel safe and comfortable in schools.

School shootings have created public concerns and the public's impression is that schools are not safe for students. Many security measures used today have little research support and strategies that help convince the public that schools are safe. It is extremely important to create a

crisis response team within the schools. Safety and security technology is just one tool that schools need to create a safe learning environment. Technology might not be the answer for all schools; it will depend on the systems used. Security cameras might work for one school but that does not mean it will work for another. The government has listened to the many concerns about school shootings and has conducted many studies to focus on the prevention and intervention of school shootings. They continue to work to develop programs, and resources to better understand the causes and addressing a wide range of school safety concerns.

Through this journey coming from the law enforcement field into the education world my interest in school shootings has grown. School shootings drills and planning can improve by applying existing evidence-based approaches that will help address the concerns and questions parents and personnel have when involving these types of situations. School and law enforcement personnel understand that safety planning and preparing are essential. It is important that both personnel coordinate and work together to plan what is needed to prevent, and intervene any incidents from occurring. Superintendents, school administrators, and law enforcement personnel have a different viewpoint that can delay planning and prepare for any safety plans involving school shootings. The bottom line is, that this is the responsibility of politicians, school leaders, and law enforcement personnel to coordinate and unite to change the minds of the American people that schools are safe for all children attending. The intended audience for this research includes students, parents, educators, staff members, counselors, administrators as well as law enforcement officials that are concerned about the improvements for the safety of schools.

Statement of the Problem

The concern that educators, local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies are facing is preventing any further school shooting attacks. The mix of factors, reasons, as well as influences, varies and the individuals involved. Being able to understand the motives and the youth violence involved has been difficult to understand. According to Sigma School Threat Management. "School shootings have been prevented when schools have learned about threatening behavior and moved quickly to gather information, assess the situation, and intervene where necessary" (2019, p. 1). Keeping threats from being carried out and trying to assess a threat has been a challenge for many educators, staff members, and administrators; however, evidence-based approaches, as well as research, have shown that threat assessment training programs have help districts prepare, plan, assess and intervene where necessary.

Following the tragic school shooting in Santa Fe, Texas, on May 18, 2018, Texas Governor Greg Abbott released a school and firearm action plan (School Safety Plan) on May 30, 2018, in his action plan his focuses were listening to what changes to existing school safety practices laws should be made (Abbott, 2018). While these tragic events must not be minimized, a focus on prevention and crisis response inventions should be considered. "Local, state, and federal officials, community members, students, teachers, and caring Texans all share the common goal of making schools a place where parents feel safe to send their children" (Abbott, 2018, p. 2). To keep schools safe, school districts and politicians came together to share their expertise and recommendations to ensure the safety of children in schools. The goal was to focus on long-term and immediate plans aimed at the prevention and protection of all school members. In the discussion with the Governor, concerns were brought out, and "they indicated that they feel hamstrung by the current laws of the state and are forced to keep students in classrooms who

represent a threat to themselves, teachers, or other students" (Abbott, 2018, p. 2). Governor Abbott signed into law Senate Bill 107 which requires school administrators to provide support to teachers when involving a threat to teacher or students in the class. Governor Abbott met with "superintendents and other school officials discussed zero-tolerance policies for serious threats in the classroom" (Abbott, 2018, p. 2). Why are school officials continually shutting down law enforcement strategies and procedures to improve and plan for emergencies? "The overall theme of the day was the importance of schools partnering with local law enforcement to plan for emergencies" (Abbott, 2018). Politicians have agreed that law enforcement and school personnel should have a close working relationship to plan for any further incidents. There is no explainable excuse for failing to fulfill these duties, the children that attend American schools should be the priority.

The Office of Justice developed programs that would help school districts, and local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies, encourage their collaboration to prevent school violence. "The STOP School Violence Act is designed to improve school security by providing students and teachers with the tools they need to quickly recognize and respond to violent attacks, mitigate risk exposure, and prevent acts of violence" (U.S. Department Justice, Office of Justice Programs, 2020, p. 156). According to the United States of Justice, the program goals are "to provide training to teachers and education to students with the intent to prevent student violence, and to provide specialized training for school officials in responding to related mental health crises that may precipitate violent attacks in schools" and "to improve security at schools and on school grounds through evidence-based school safety programs making use of physical security measures, technology, and coordination with local law enforcement" (U.S. Department Justice, Office of Justice Programs, 2020, p. 156). Goals have been set by states and our country,

we all must come together to change the existing school policies and procedures to ensure the safety of our students and the school personnel that care for our children. According to the Office of the Texas Governor, Greg Abbott, he states, “While progress is being made, there is still much work to be done and I encourage everyone in Texas to continue the discussion surrounding school safety to ensure that we put in place measures that will benefit the safety and well-being of our state’s greatest resource – our children” (Office of the Texas Governor, 2018, p. 1).

School Shootings History

Dating back to the 18th century in the year 1764, the Enoch Brown school massacre was one of the first school massacres in history. Little is known about this massacre but is mentioned it happened on school property and was known as the Pontiac's Rebellion school massacre. The little that was reported in this massacre was that there were four Lenape American Indians that entered the schoolhouse shot and killed the schoolmaster and children. "Out of 13 children enrolled in the school, only three survived" (Dixon, 2005, as cited in Paolini, 2015). This massacre has made history even though much is not known; it continues to have an impact on our country.

On March 28, 1999, in Jonesboro, Arkansas, another deadly incident has occurred, two students that attended this middle school, Mitchell Johnson, 13 years old, and Andrew Golden, 11 years old conducted an armed ambush on four students, all girls, a pregnant teacher, and, wounded 10 others with non-fatal injuries while attending school (Miller, n.d, p. 1). They had just returned from spring break before the shooting. Their first-period class was just about to begin when the alarm goes off and everyone evacuated the building. Andrew Golden triggered the alarm and then met up with his friend Mitchell Johnson who was waiting for Andrew in nearby bushes. According to History Collection, “Mitchell’s parents divorced and he moved to

Jonesboro, where his mother remarries an inmate at the prison where she worked as a guard” (Miller, n.d, p. 1). Andrew Golden was said to have a good relationship with his parents and was familiar with firearms, would compete, and place winning trophies. Golden was not a student with any disciplinary problems at school; he was well mannered and a cheerful student. Both boys bullied other students and often talked about joining gangs. "Texas lawmakers responded to bullying in schools bypassing David's Law, also known as Senate Bill 179, to combat bullying and cyberbullying among school-aged children" (Patterson, n.d). Cyberbullying is “defined as “willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices,” cyberbullying has become a growing concern” (Patchin, 2013). This law was enacted in remembrance of David Molak, a 16-year-old high school student that died by suicide after being harassed and cyberbullied. The new Bill is in effect to bring awareness to new policies in schools to help with cyberbullying.

Both students were found guilty of five counts of murder and were taken to Alexander, Arkansas, to serve their time in the Arkansas Juvenile Assessment and Treatment Center, one of the most secure juvenile facilities. They were not to be released until age 21. Johnson was released in 2005 and Golden released in 2007. “The two children were among the youngest people ever charged with murder in American history” (Miller, n.d, p. 1). “The incident was one of two school shootings in Arkansas and one of several school shootings across the nation that adjusted school administrators’ and law enforcement officers’ concepts on school security and response plans to violent incidents at schools” (Ford, 2019). Today, this school stands a historical scar that will never be forgotten. It is another name added to the unforgettable list of school shootings.

A school shooting and an attempt to bomb a school occurred on April 20, 1999, at Columbine High School, in Littleton, Colorado. Two teens that attended the high school went on a shooting spree killing 12 students, and one teacher before turning their guns on themselves. Eric Harris, 18, and Dylan Klebold, 17, wearing trench coats, started their massacre outside their school. Then they moved inside the school, where they made their way through the school and gunned many of their victims in the library. According to NBC News, “Hundreds of pages of hate-filled diary entries, maps and documents released Thursday offer a chilling insight into the minds of the Columbine High School killers in the days and months before the 1999 massacre.” (2006, p. 1). The highly publicized incident pressured politicians, law enforcement agencies and educational leaders to reflect and evaluate the safety in American schools. According to History, “there was speculation that Harris and Klebold committed the killings because they were members of a group of social outcasts called the Trenchcoat Mafia that was fascinated by Goth culture” (2020). They were retaliating for being bullied. “In the aftermath of the shootings, many schools across America enacted “zero-tolerance” rules regarding disruptive behavior and threats of violence from students” (History, 2020). Zero-tolerance rules go back to drug enforcement, are zero-tolerance rules making a difference in preventing school shootings? Research proves otherwise, school shootings are on the rise and continue to be a crisis in our country.

On the morning of December 14, 2012, an intentional mass school shooting took place at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newton, Connecticut. Adam Lanza shot and killed 20 first-grade students and six school employees. Lanza, 20, spent most of his time in the basement of the house he and his mother shared. Earlier that day Adam shot and killed his mother, Nancy, shooting her four times as she slept. He then drove to the Sandy Hook campus, where he stormed inside carrying an AR-15-style Bushmaster rifle. “Hearing the noise, the school principal and

school psychologist went to investigate and were shot and killed by Lanza, who was armed with a semiautomatic rifle, two semiautomatic pistols and multiple rounds of ammunition” (History, 2019, p.1). In a period of fewer than five minutes, he fired 154 rounds. "The children Lanza murdered, 12 girls and 8 boys, were 6 and 7 years old" (History, 2019, p. 1). Lanza hears the police responding and he takes his life in one classroom. Investigators later discovered his mother owned multiple weapons and he was able to use the rifle to commit this horrendous act. Lanza was described as having mental issues. According to the History investigation, they found that "in November 2013, the Connecticut State's Attorney released a report noting that Lanza had "significant mental health issues that affected his ability to live a normal life and to interact with others." However, mental health professionals who had worked with him "did not see anything that would have predicted his future behavior," according to the report" (2019). Mental health issues have been studied, and the results have shown that it has an impact on some school shooters. After this shooting again politicians and “President Obama called for new gun-safety measures; however, his primary legislative goal, expanded background checks for gun buyers, was blocked by the U.S. Senate (History, 2019). Ten months after the school shooting massacre, Sandy Hook elementary was demolished in 2013 and a new school has been rebuilt and opened in 2016. The school creates a friendly environment but also provides school safety by elevating the ground to make it harder to see inside the classrooms. The school was completed with a lot of change in mind, focusing on student safety and a nurturing environment. "The design for the new Sandy Hook "hides" its security features in plain sight, offering improved natural surveillance and increased situational awareness through an extensive series of windows, as well as a gradual, guarded approach from the main road” (Sisson, 2018, p. 1). In building Sandy Hook Elementary, “a series of workshops with parents, teachers, and first responders helped the team at Svigals get

a better sense of what Newtown residents wanted from the new school.” (Sisson, 2018, p. 4). By involving the community helped to ensure that the new school provided a safe environment, however; they also considered ethical decisions that would increase the protection of all members attending the school.

On Friday, May 18, 2018, once again, another tragedy has occurred during the morning school hours in a small city near Houston, Texas. Santa Fe High School was under a gun attack by one of their students, Dimitrios Pagourtzis, “who was a junior when he allegedly brought a shotgun, pistol, and explosives to the school and began firing on his classmates” (Martin, 2018, p. 2). Isabelle Laymance, 15, remembers phoning her mother, whispering “Mom, they’re shooting up the school,” (Martin, 2020, p. 2). She remembers telling her mother that she loved her and that she was hiding in a closet and could hear the sounds of shots being fired. After the shots had stopped, authorities could find “ten people had been killed and thirteen injured” that morning.

This was another incident where there were warning signs and no parent or school staff member was able to identify the signs. This just proves that parents, school staff, are not paying any attention to warnings that could lead to harming themselves or others. In the statements that Governor Abbott shared, there was information "contained in journals on his computer and his cellphone that he said that not only did he want to commit the shooting, but he wanted to commit suicide after the shooting," Abbott said" (Evan et al., 2018, p. 6). This has been the issue in many school shootings. Warning signs were not identified or reported and this led shooters to take actions and take the lives of innocent victims.

The Santa Fe School District came together with the community and law enforcement officials to discuss prevention and intervention strategies. "The district also beefed up campus

security, adding real-time video monitoring, door alarms, and an increased number of police officers on campus" (Samuel, 2019, p. 1). It takes a team effort to help prevent and intervene with these types of violent crimes. These horrific incidents will never be forgotten and will continue to be in our hearts forever.

Conclusion

School violence is something that will continue to exist but if we practice better communication and be proactive it will help to prevent any further violence against schools. Administrators and staff members need to update policy and procedures with existing strategies, prevention, and crisis response interventions that prove to work in safety planning for schools. Ethical principles are vital in all youths, ethics sets the standards of what is acceptable and what is not, and protects both students and school staff. If students, teachers, and staff members provide a negative environment, it can contribute to school violence. It is important to communicate to all students, teachers, and staff members that administrators have an open door policy to communicate any threat they may know that may cause any damage to any member of their school. Being able to practice an open-door policy is a great way to help encourage open communication, feedback, and discussion with students, and staff. This also helps model effective procedures and creates standards for learning and safety, expectations, and accountability. A successful open-door policy will help build the trust and relationships needed to provide a nurturing environment within the school.

Chapter 2: Review and Literature Ethical Lens Views

Ethical principles are rules of ethics, and it defines right from wrong and good from inappropriate behavior. We face many challenges and choices that can affect our lives. Ethics is

a guide to help humanity in their daily moral living and it allows us to look back and judge our misconduct. It does not provide a direct guide that guarantees the making of an ethically correct decision, instead; it offers considerations that should be considered when deciding. School shootings have affected our country and good ethical decisions are not being prioritized by humanity. “In the 2005-06 school year, only 40 percent of American public schools drilled students on lockdown procedures in the event of a shooting; by the 2015-16 school year, 95 percent did” (Everytown, 2020). “The failure of our leaders to address the root causes of school gun violence from all angles is having lasting consequences for millions of American children” (Everytown, 2020). Leaders must guarantee that students are safe while they attend school to achieve their educational goals. We have heard of many incidents that have caused concerns and ethical dilemmas for educators around our country. “If we do not reach out to teachers who are highly stressed or unsupported in a school system or have witnessed a traumatic event in their classroom, we create a “society of separateness” (Lama, 1999, as cited in Duffy and Mooney, 2014). Policymakers, school leaders, and crisis response teams can create a safe, secure, and peaceful environment from any destructive influence of violence that will help students and teachers feel safe. Providing different styles of training such as classroom-based, real-life scenarios, case studies, and computer-based can be vital for all professionals to prepare for incidents that might occur in a school. “During classroom training case studies motivate thinking and allow officers to test their moral reasoning skills” (Fortenbery, 2015, p. 5). All organizations must implement training that will provide purposefully, and well-organized strategies to increase levels of safety and security and promoting student wellness and safety. These efforts improve students’ readiness to learn, build positive school climates, and will help students and staff feel safe.

In the past, parents have had friends or family members that would purchase a rifle as a birthday gift for a young family member, and the violence was not seen as it is today. In our modern world, children have access to guns just about anywhere. “Nearly 4.6 million American children live in homes with at least one gun that is loaded and unlocked” Everytown, 2020, p. 22, homes, friends, or even an acquaintance. The main issue is that when youths have access to these weapons, it is no longer for recreation, it is to hurt someone. School shooting incidents are constantly affecting our communities, and some parents are not fulfilling parental duties. Some parents are no longer involved in their children’s lives, no longer know who their children are associating with, and parents are failing to teach their children morals and values of life.

The lack of accurate understanding and poor emergency management of a safety plan has been and will continue to be an ethical problem for school districts. Some safety plans in place would like to prepare for realistic active shooter drills; however, some educators will not engage in any type of scenario that could prepare them for this type of incident. Some educators have sued the district for allowing this type of realistic training to become part of the school safety plan. Districts fail to provide an understanding of their plans to students and school members and this results in poor management in this area. The bottom line is that school districts need to make their ethical principles as clear as possible so that ethical issues do not follow, or are violated. It is important to keep these questions in mind to help prevent any issues, how do school districts prepare students and educators for such incidents, how can everyone be treated safety plans not violate any policies or codes of ethics, how can everyone be treated with respect, fairness and not placing anyone in harm's way when preparing for these types of training?

According to Everytown, less than 1 percent of the approximately 40,000 gun deaths a year occur on school grounds, “drills to prepare students and staff to respond in the unlikely

event of a shooting have become a near-universal practice in American schools today, starting in preschool and continuing through high school” (2020, p.1). When violence occurs at schools, trust is violated, and other ethical principles, which reduce schools' efforts to attain their primary mission of educating all students and helping them to reach their full potential. "One place to look is the world of research, in particular, the National Research Act of 1974, which required that human research subjects must be protected. In turn, this led to the 1976 publication of the Belmont Report, which identified three fundamental ethical principles for all human research: (1) that it show respect for the people involved, (2), that it does no harm to subjects, and (3) that procedures be administered fairly" (Perrodin, 2020, p. 1).

While it identifies these as three fundamental ethical principles, each has its meaning for protecting all individuals. Respect for persons, “consists of two distinct principles: individuals should be treated as autonomous and individuals with diminished autonomy should be entitled to additional protections” (The Belmont Report, 2014). Respect is to ensure that all participants that would like to voluntarily take part in a safety drill are protected during the drill. If respect is given, respect will be returned and respect allows improvement in communication, collaboration, strong relationships, trust, safety, and well-being.

While introducing safety drills to students or staff members, it is essential to ensure that no one is harmed during the training. Being able to look at the entire landscape and consider if, “there is another way that we could obtain the same knowledge but with lower risks to participants,” would help volunteers understand everything is being considered for their safety and also to share an explanation for the reason behind the safety training drills (The Belmont Report, 2014). Ensuring that original ideas, strategies, training are being considered safeguarding everyone and no one is harmed during the scenario is essential. Allowing staff members to share

their opinions, ideas, or suggestions even though they may not be used, shows that they have a voice. Providing training scenarios that will help staff and students get prepared will be the major priority; however, keeping them safe will always take the lead.

Our last principle is being fair. “The principle of justice addresses the distribution of the burdens and benefits of research” (The Belmont Report, 2014, p. 2). This principle is important because it helps participants understand and will receive a clear picture of why these types of scenarios are in place. "A key ingredient for developing ethical employees and leaders is frequent and consistent training" (Fortenbery, 2015). Although this study is for medical studies, it serves a purpose in education and the criminal justice field, it ensures that no student, educator, or administrator is not harmed, respected, and are treated fairly during any school safety training/drill. Being fair will show that the employer recognizes employees as valuable, and dedicated individuals that enjoy the workplace.

Another requirement that comes into place that is important in the development of school shooting drills is the Instructional Review Board, “(IRBs), remain a critical component of the clinical research process, as they work to ensure that each study involving human subjects has scientific merit, is ethically sound, and follows regulatory requirements” (Schindelholz, 2019, p. 3). The IRB is an act that was signed by President Nixon, “although this is not a form of human research, it could help supply as an ethical foundation for evaluating school safety practices” (Perrodin, 2020, p. 2). A school safety plan is important because it ensures students, teachers, and staff are prepared when any disaster attacks. These are some guidelines and procedures that must be considered when previewing and evaluating school safety drills to minimize the risks of all individuals involved. It will comprise of the following, will consent be given, will it be documented appropriately, will this be monitored closely to ensure safety, and is there protection

for all involved? All training provided will be closely monitored, will be documented, and will ensure the safety of everyone. The documentation of the training will also serve a purpose that no policy or code of ethics is violated. These are important regulations that should always be considered to make sure the right procedures are in place when previewing, evaluating, or updating school safety plans.

When teachers and staff clearly understand both policies and the codes of ethics, they can apply long-term benefits for all students. The staff has engaged to get themselves prepared for an incident involving active shooters in schools that will safeguard the students. “Teachers who develop two-way avenues of respect, compassion, and openness build large groups of followers inclusive of students, administrators, and the learning community” (Blasé & Blasé, 2001; Coles, 2000, as cited in Duffy and Mooney, 2014). The author makes a point here. Teachers who show respect, compassion, honesty to their students will have followers, followers that will come together to help the teacher be aware of any acts of violence that may occur. “When family, educators, or law enforcement are made aware that a student or another person is a risk to themselves or others, and that the person has access to guns, they can use a court process and ask a judge for a civil restraining order” (Everytown, 2020). The goal of all school personnel is to develop a safe and caring environment for all students. Developing school programs in the district will help youths in building ethical values such as respect, fairness, responsibility, caring, and social responsibility. An Educator’s practice is to be frontline professionals, caregivers, be role models, nurture, build a warm environment, a mentor, and build student character for all students.

While not all acts of violence can be prevented, policies, procedures, and codes of ethics will help guide educators on what approach to take involving school safety. Being able to

emphasize clear communication, foster positive personal connectedness, and implement evidence-based support will be most effective in preventing school violence. As schools get prepared to implement school safety drills/plans, there must be a balance in preparing students, and school staff. “In February 2020, the National Education Association, the American Federation of Teachers, and Everytown for Gun Safety called on schools to take a hard look at how their active shooter drills are affecting students” (Everytown Research, 2020). Priority is keeping our students, and educators safe from any school violence, closely monitoring and ensuring school plans are updated for the safety of everyone.

Creating threat assessment programs and teams will also help prepare for early interventions, which is key in addressing violent behaviors, identifying, evaluating threats or potential threats, and review incidents of threatening behavior by students. It is not about traumatizing our children, but practicing how to react and to survive these horrific incidents. These threat assessment programs will help provide prevention strategies, develop intervention plans, protect potential victims and address any problems or conflict that encouraged the threat. "It's time for our leaders to adopt a multi-faceted approach that provides school communities with the tools they need to intervene and prevent school-based gun violence" (Everytown, 2020). All leaders must be involved, the district superintendent, city leaders, administrators, policymakers, campus police, and all emergency resources to implement a safe school plan and drills/plans. Leaders should have a complete understanding of how school shootings are affecting schools, and make it their priority to decide on the proper actions that will be taken to safeguard the school district. Being able to look at the entire picture and provide a clear understanding of policy, procedures, and ethical principles in the code of ethics will assist all employees to become familiar with what is expected and what must be followed within the school district.

It is the responsibility of all leaders and school personnel to be alert and practice an open mind when looking for any warning signs of changed behavior or threats being communicated. Signs can be online, at home, indirect, or direct, it is also essential that we pay close attention to mental health issues, lack of ethics, no friends, a dysfunctional family, drawings, pictures, and projects to help prevent such incidents from happening. Indirect warning signs will be the most difficult to identify. For example, in the Columbine school shooting, Eric Harris students involved in the school shooting told his friends that he needed multiple propane tanks by April, 2. When they asked him why, he said, "it was Hitler's birthday." On this day, April 20, Adolf Hitler was born in Germany. Usually, someone will notice the behaviors, but they ignored the pattern of harmful behavior, and this behavior is never communicated to anyone. In the Madfis model, it is described as a planning process for the active shooter that will create mass destruction. "In accordance with Levin and Madfis' model, the five stages include chronic strain (having a range of negative experiences in the school), uncontrolled strain (strain of everyday life is left unchecked with the absence of pro-social relationships), acute strain (loss occurs and is perceived as catastrophic to the attacker), planning stage (time is spent planning a massacre), and massacre at school (students who plan and carry out massacres have access to firearms)" (Paolini, 2015, p. 4). Usually, the attacker is living out a fantasy to regain loss feelings of control, and actions are taken to fulfill their fantasy. Observing and paying attention to warning signs can help prevent any future incidents. Communication is a key component in all professions, these patterns of negative behaviors must be communicated by students, teachers, and staff members will be able to intervene and to ensure time is not on their side to plan the horrific destruction.

An ethical dilemma that schools encounter frequently in school shooting incidents is the screening for mental health testing, most involved shooters have been diagnosed by behavioral health experts, and yet nothing was done to monitor the individual or communicate the issues, and this has become a major concern in school shootings. "The Safe Schools Initiative Report also suggested that 71% of the attackers were victims of bullying and 10% of the attackers who were receiving treatment for their diagnosed mental illness failed to comply to take their prescribed psychiatric medications" (Paolini, 2015, p. 3). Some students believe that this is a major issue and the government must be aware and consider it. Mya, an 11th-grade student from McKinney, Texas stated, "The problem America has is that we give everyone a gun without any mental health testing" (PBS News Hour Extra, 2019). Another student, Katie, an 11th grader from Parker Colorado stated, "Cruz was even evaluated by behavioral health experts, yet he was not hospitalized or detained" (referring to the Nikolas Cruz, Stoneman Douglas High School Shooting) (PBS News Hour Extra, 2019). The students have shared their concerns on how they feel when it involves guns and mental health issues. Will anyone listen to their outcries?

Wike and Fraser's study in 2009 found:

Wike and Fraser found that school-aged mass shooters have a few common characteristics and differences. Traumatized shooters are those that come from dysfunctional homes and have had exposure to both substance abuse and criminal behaviors. Psychotic shooters are those who come from intact families but may suffer from schizophrenia, conduct disorder, oppositional defiant disorder, or another mental illness. Psychopathic shooters are those who were neither abused nor psychotic but lacked empathy and displayed symptoms of narcissism (Wike & Fraser, 2009, as cited in Paolini, 2015, p. 3).

How will the government help keep students safe in schools, will their voices be heard, or will they be shut down?

Students are at an age where they cannot vote; however, they want to make a difference, this is the reason they express themselves to ensure their voices are being heard. “Using data to paint the full picture of what gun violence looks like on school grounds and drawing upon research and recommendations from school safety experts, Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund (Everytown), the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), and the National Education Association (NEA) have crafted a comprehensive plan focused on interventions that can prevent mass shooting incidents and help end all gun violence in American schools” (Everytown, 2020). Ensuring that school personnel, students, parents, medical professionals, and law enforcement communicate behavior changes, warning signs in students, diagnosis of mental disorders affecting our students can help prevent and intervene before another disaster happens. Students who have been involved in a mass or school shooting have left evidence behind that during their lifetime, they were victims of bullying, “which resulted in thoughts of suicide or revenge” (Lee, 2013, as cited in Paolini, 2015).

It will take the effort of all educators, policymakers, leaders, and emergency responders, working together to find prevention and intervention strategies to prevent any future violent attacks in schools. Although, it is important to empathize that many school shootings take "15 minutes or less from the beginning of the shooting to the time the attacker was apprehended, surrendered or stopped shooting (Vossekuil et al., 2004, p. 28). This does not mean leaders wait for another attack, it means leaders take the action to prevent and intervene. Developing prevention and intervention strategies is crucial for all school districts, also referring back to the

protocols, and procedures will help manage such threats. Being able to have current and well-organized school plans in place will help prepare for these incidents.

Safety steps must be in place when previewing and applying a safety school drill to ensure everyone's safety. School district must first make certain that all students, staff member, as well as educators, have clarification and understanding of why policies, procedures are in place, the reason for following them, and how taking part in school shooting training in no such way will violate policy or the code of ethics. Policy and the code of ethics are in place as a guide and reference for employees to refer to if they believe there has been a violation. Making the proper suggestions for a safety plan, policy, and code of ethics will be the priority when making any decisions in developing a school safety plan/drill. Some steps to consider when reviewing and evaluating a school safety plan for everyone is, first, it would not involve any situations that feel like an actual situation, parents will be involved, drills should not be kept a secret from students, educators, staff, law enforcement personnel, or parents, schools will also consider the training for the proper age of students, the resources will be available for anyone that needs attention such as, mental health professionals. The practiced school safety drill will be documented to track what was efficient, what failed, and what needs modification to provide a successful plan that will work for the school. All schools need to ensure their safety plan is appropriate and works for their school, a plan that has been updated, evaluated, or changed might work for one school but might not be successful for another. Even with all positive thoughts, ideas, suggestions, procedures, and policies in place, there will be a disorder, however, being able to change safety plans that prove otherwise will help in reducing these issues. Practiced drills are important and must be in place, but drills that harm students and educators are not successful.

Another important factor is that drills must be clear guidance, not violate policy or the codes of ethics to be effective. Active shooter drills have an advantage and this is to prepare educators as well as students for any school shooting situations that may occur in schools but, to "demonstrate the sound of gunfire, pelting teachers with projectiles," is not necessary and will be inefficient (Blad, & Will, 2019). Hurting someone physically and emotionally will not help in preparing for any actual school shooting, it will traumatize the individual involved and will not turn out as a successful training. Lockdowns are drills that schools have implemented to their safety, which have shown little effect on the safety of students. "But some policymakers—fearing that lockdowns turn students into vulnerable "sitting ducks"—have turned to multi-option drills, which train participants in a variety of possible responses, including climbing out of school windows, barricading doors with desks, and even fighting back by hurling objects like books and staplers at armed intruders" (Blad, & Will, 2019). Lockdowns are ineffective, and policymakers agree, lockdowns are only hindering students from taking action for their safety.

The first drills that will take place will involve educators that will volunteer and take part in the training. When teachers will participate in training, it runs much smoother and being successful. Implementing a safety drill training in which students can take part after teachers have gone through the process will help build muscle memory that will help them survive. A Pennsylvania teacher stated, "that while she thinks it's important for teachers to go through active-shooter training, she doesn't think it's necessary to be taught to "take on" a gunman" (Blad, & Will, 2019). Many educators express different feelings when it involves any type of physical training, but it can be helpful for educators to understand why the training is being offered and what can be done if this situation ever occurs in their workplace.

Some educators will participate in this training to help feel safe, prepared, and to ensure the protection of all students.

In the education world, all leaders need to be mindful that all eyes are on them, and they must practice what they speak. Actions always speak louder than words, you must “walk the walk,” to display ethical behavior. “Walk the walk” is doing the things one says one will do. This will always send a positive message to all employees and will help with the morale in the organization. Policy and codes of ethics will send clear communication of expectations, the organization's primary values, and ethical rules that all must follow. It is the responsibility of all organizations to ensure that their employees have an understanding and the proper training in their code of ethics. We live in a modern world where policy, procedures, and codes of ethics are important in all organizations, and all members of the organizations must have quick access to the codes of ethics and policy electronically to use as a reference so they are not caught in any legal issues that can affect their profession.

Being able to know and follow policy, procedures, and the code of ethics will help individuals understand what is accepted and what is not. The government enacts laws so citizens of the states can follow, but some laws are not clear and contradict what it states. It has been known through this research review that after any school shooting incidents, politicians come together to grieve and then enacted more laws into place, but these laws are lacking clear clarification. Another issue is that the laws that have been enacted are challenged at the Supreme Court levels requesting a logical explanation of the law. School shooting laws have been one of the most controversial laws since school shootings have been occurring.

Conclusion

School shootings continue to hurt families, educators, and children. These horrendous acts need much attention, and there cannot be any more debates on this topic. The list goes on

and on, arming teachers, fewer guns, more guns, mental health screenings, school security, and parenting. This is an ethical dilemma that needs a solution, not discussions. This a cycle of violence that continues to occur, a shooting happens, everyone responds, prayers and thoughts are shared, politicians speak on behalf of the schools, and make it certain that they will take action, then it is over, everyone forgets, and now we wait for another school shooting to happen, and the cycle continues. Schools can no longer guarantee the safety of our children. The communities' outcries are being ignored; therefore many have shared their thoughts, voices, and concerns involving school shootings. Taking school safety plans seriously and being able to use an evidence-based approach to update or reevaluate policies and codes of ethics will not only keep our schools safe, but also maintain a safe environment for all students, educators, and staff members. For long-term solutions, it will take united collaboration from the school district, law enforcement authorities, emergency medical and fire/rescue personnel, and politicians to guarantee safety in all schools.

Legal & Legislative Lens View

It is time for this nation to come together to address the ongoing gun violence crisis in schools. States are more focused on passing laws than Congress, and this is frustrating to the American people. Americans have suffered from many school shootings, and modern debates about the Second Amendment have focused on whether it protects the private rights of citizens to keep bear arms. This has been the debate for many years and will continue to be a discussion that will have no end. The president of the National Association for Gun Rights stated, “They rely on crisis to give them steam” (PBS, 2018). It is more than just the actions of government; it also includes the behaviors or outcomes that government action creates. A policy can be made even when the government refuses to act in ways that would change the status, circumstances, or

public opinion. Government affects all aspects of citizens' lives and anyone that has involvement in public policies enacted by federal, state, and local governments. Many citizens and groups try to influence public policy through the political process by supporting candidates and political parties. Congress encounters many controversies when a law is challenged, and these challenged laws result in being vetoed, no resolution, or no clear clarification of the law. Through this research, it was found that laws have a better chance of standing at the state level rather than the federal level, and for this reason, states and school districts are now working together to ensure the safety of schools by focusing on strategies and plans that will focus on intervening and preventing these horrific crimes.

In the aftermath of the most recent school shootings, the government has focused on new resources to keep students safe in schools. The focus is to address student mental health issues that will help counselors provide an intervention that can alleviate any gun-related school violence. "Following a deadly shooting at Santa Fe High School in May that left 10 dead and 13 others wounded, Gov. Greg Abbott released a 43-page school safety plan outlining suggestions for bills the Legislature could pass this session to reduce the threat of gun violence in Texas schools" (Samuels, 2019, p.1). Security devices and school resource officers are important resources that governments at the state level are implementing in schools to help with these incidents. "Threat assessment teams were created by the Secret Service and the Department of Education following the Columbine shooting to help support schools prevent any other school violence attacks" (Vossekuil, et al., 2004, p.3). The important part to remember is that there may be many resources and programs, but if school personnel is failing students by not building relationships, nurturing, providing a safe climate, then students are not being saved.

America continues to suffer from gun violence, and mass shootings, and school shootings. One of the first was dated back to “1764, in Greencastle, Pennsylvania, where four Lenape American Indians entered the schoolhouse and shot and killed nine children, only two students survived” (Paolini, 2015, p. 1). After each school or mass shooting, the debate turns to gun violence, mental health, and school security. “Exposure to gun violence has an impact on the psychological and mental well-being of children and teens and affects their school performance, among other factors” (Everytown, 2021), p. 1). As school shootings continue to affect our country, the government continues to make rulings on laws that have no clear vision, curb the Second Amendment, and struggles with constitutional barriers. “Public policy-makers, school administrators, police officials, and parents continue to search for explanations for the targeted violence that occurred at Columbine High School and other schools across the country and seek assurance that similar incidents will not be repeated at educational institutions in their communities” (Vossekuil, et al., 2004, p. 6). The American people, school officials, and politicians must work together and communicate to prevent any more horrendous crimes against children.

The Second Amendment brings many different rulings that are not clear and advocates have many questions and concerns on current rulings involving "the right to bear arms." In 2008, a group of gun owners challenged a controversial handgun ban in Washington, D.C. because it violated the Second Amendment. The *District of Columbia v. Heller* (2008) was the first time the Supreme Court interpreted the Second Amendment in terms of what it meant for an individual's right to possess weapons for private uses such as self-defense” (Bill of Rights Institute, n.d. p. 1). Several lower courts ruled in their favor, and the Supreme Court upheld those rulings in a landmark 5-4 decision. “The Court agreed with Heller, finding the ban unconstitutional and

holding that the Second Amendment protects an individual right to keep suitable weapons at home for self-defense unconnected to militia service” (Bill of Rights Institute, n.d. p. 1). Since 2008, courts across the country have found several gun safety laws constitutional even after the Heller decision. However, the Court also clarified that, like other constitutional rights, the Second Amendment right is "not unlimited." The Court stated that its opinion did not cast doubt on other "longstanding prohibitions" on gun ownership by certain persons and in certain places. These decisions have an impact and affected gun laws in the United States, and will need a recurring evaluation in the years to come. Working out the limits of the Second Amendment protection will continue to be a challenge for this country. What government is not understanding is that this is causing debates on how to control gun violence and prevent any other school shootings from occurring

In 2010, the high court *McDonald v. Chicago* held that the Second Amendment restricts both federal and state regulation of gun ownership and usage. The McDonald and Heller cases have many similarities between the two, but the McDonald ruling goes much further, saying that all state and local gun control laws must meet the standards of the Second Amendment, and the Heller ruling, not just federal laws. The Court has left another open door once again. The question of which gun control laws, could be reconciled with the Heller and McDonald rulings. “The gun-rights advocates, including leaders of the National Rifle Association, stated that the McDonald ruling puts several state and local gun control laws in jeopardy, and have already promised to challenge those laws in court” (PBS, 2010). These are only two rulings involving handguns in the United States, and even with a case dated back in 2008, there is still no clear vision or decision on how to understand the Second Amendment. This country will continue to

have children massacred because the government is not willing to stand up and rule in favor of protecting the American children that attend schools.

This research review found that many concerned citizens and advocates continue to challenge the Second Amendment at the federal, state, and local levels. Each state stands for what they believe is safe in their state, but rulings are being decided and no decision is an infinite ruling. "Advocacy groups concerned about the mass shooting are requesting the Supreme Court not to broaden the Second Amendment right to keep and bear arms as the justices consider a gun rights case now before them" (Walsh, 2019). The National Education Association filed a brief urging the court not to retreat from its statement in the landmark 2008 Second Amendment decision, *District of Columbia v. Heller*, that "laws forbidding the carrying of firearms in sensitive places such as schools and government buildings" were presumptively constitutional. Another brief came from Everytown for Gun Safety, a group formed following the 2012 mass shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, in which a shooter killed 20 children and six adults. The Everytown brief urged the Supreme Court not to use the New York City case to issue a broad opinion on "the right to bear arms outside the home." Being able to research further concerns does not or will end when involving the Second Amendment decisions and rulings. They have enacted this expresses that many laws have been enacted that request the need of clarification, evaluations, and relevant rulings.

Justice Antonin Scalia stated, for the majority, the Second Amendment protects an individual right to possess a firearm unconnected with militia service and to use it for traditionally lawful purposes, such as self-defense in the home (Oyez, 2008, 07-290). For decades, the meaning of the Second Amendment has been at the heart of a political and legal debate over gun control. People have argued whether it guarantees the right to bear arms to

individuals or citizens in a militia. Laws are enacted, and then reevaluated, but are laws making a difference? If laws are not the solution in preventing the next school shooting attack, then what is?

What lawful solutions are currently in place to protect children that attend American schools? How can school shooting incidents be prevented? In the Sandy Hook (2012), and Parkland (2018) school shooting incidents, policy-makers focused on adding several laws that focused on preparatory strategies. The research proves that state policymakers are focusing more on what can be done at the school level instead of trying to change the current amendments, and laws that are currently in place. The case rulings have revealed that the government remains with uncertain rulings and controversies when it involves clarification in gun laws. Governments have placed a tunnel vision image and have accepted that the current laws and amendments in place that involve gun control are not connected to what is causing school shootings. Turning the focus to school districts, it is now the responsibility of school administrators to ensure the safety of children that attend schools. "According to Vossekuil, et al. (2002), school officials need to be able to rapidly evaluate information that could warn of impending school violence and conduct threat assessments before a violent outburst in order for strategies to be put in place" (Paolini, 2015, p. 2). School officials will act, not by challenging laws but by providing mental health programs, better communication relationships with students as well as staff, positive behavior support, increase in teachers training and peer intervention, and with this place, this will help in keeping school and children safe.

The government enacted laws in 2013 that concentrated on mental health issues, hiring additional counselors as well as school resources officers, security measures, creating threat assessment teams, and the use of technology to report troubled students a priority, and through

the years gradual additions have been added to these laws. Also included was how school districts can better support building better climates, support students' character development, as well as their social-emotional learning. "According to the National Association of School Psychologists (2006), students who receive social-emotional and mental health support are more successful academically and personally" (Paolini, 2015, p. 6). Also "because educators observe students' emotional and behavioral development daily, they are best positioned to detect troubled behaviors and intervene" (Daley, 2018, p.1). States have incorporated several school laws into place without any assessment, states should consider the existing laws to ensure that the laws in place are making a difference in school safety." States have long incorporated character development into their laws; more recently, some states have adopted language specific to social and emotional learning" (Temkin, et al., 2020, p. 4). Social and emotional learning is a foundation that will provide safe and positive learning that helps enhance student's ability to succeed in life. "As of 2019, 37 states have laws that encourage or require schools to address character development or social-emotional learning" (Temkin, et al., 2020, p. 4). States and school districts have focused on creating and implementing programs, strategies, and plans that will work for their districts, keeping in mind that one plan or strategy might work for one but not another; however, some schools are going above and beyond to ensure the safety of schools in their districts.

The school district's objective is to focus on student mental health problems and raise awareness in schools so students can rely on a system that will help them deal with any inner issues. "A survey of 9,000 homes reveals that about half of all Americans will meet some sort of diagnostic criteria for a mental disorder at some point in their lifetime, with the age of onset typically occurring during childhood or adolescence" (Kessler et al., 2005, as cited in Paolini,

2015, p. 3). Most of these youths that suffer from a mental health issue do not receive any type of medical attention. "Seventy-five percent of students struggling with mental illness do not receive mental health services, and mental health is a key component in students' healthy development (Stagman & Cooper, 2010, as cited in Paolini, 2015, p. 5). Another issue is that parents do not want to accept or do not recognize that their child is suffering from a form of mental health issue and may be opposed to providing medical attention.

Hiring more counselors is another priority in helping schools with mental health issues. Counselors play a crucial role in supporting students and with training and expertise, they also help with academic achievements as well as mental, college, and career readiness. "Counselors and educators need to acknowledge students who are potentially suffering from a mental illness, offer them the support and resources that they need via an alliance with mental health agencies, and provide workshops for parents to raise awareness about the association between mental illness and gun" (Paolini, 2015, p. 6). Counselors have a demanding job, they must be able to recognize that the student is suffering from a mental issue and take the proper actions to ensure the student receives the help needed. Some districts have made this a priority and have resulted in positive results. "State Rep. Shawn Thierry, D-Houston, already has filed two bills that would expand mental health initiatives in schools: one requiring that mental health be included in the curriculum at public schools and other allowing districts to appoint mental health service providers as advisers to help design on-campus mental health care programs" (Samuels, 2019, p. 1). This may help reduce the violence in schools if the counselor can get the student the help needed. This can also help families and students get educated on mental health issues that can help to encourage any student that is suffering from any type of mental problems. "On the other hand, although constraints and challenges exist, school counselors have the unique opportunity to

instill hope and provide the support that can lead to monumental changes in the lives of students struggling with mental illness" (Paolini, 2015, p. 6). Counselors can help students improve their problem-solving, coping skills, communication, and self-reflection to make better choices in life.

Security measures have been one of the safety resources implement in schools by states and school districts. "Too often, however, these important resources are used to implement more stringent security measures in schools, including hiring SROs, installing security devices such as metal detectors, and even arming teachers with guns" (Fiddiman, et al., 2018, p. 1). Some have agreed that some security measures are failing the school system, and the focus should be on students, not security devices. Through this research, they found that improving school climate will keep students and teachers in safe schools. "Evidence suggests, however, that these stringent security measures do not make schools safer" and there is no evidence that these measures are effective in preventing school shootings (Fiddiman, et al. 2018, p. 5).

Research and politicians have focused on arming teachers, however, many do not believe that arming teachers is the answer to making schools safe. An armed teacher during a school shooting and under stress can result in harming other students or maybe shot by law enforcement officers. "Our leaders should instead pursue an evidence-based intervention plan that addresses what we know about school gun violence" (Everytown, 2019, p. 2). Law enforcement is required to have certain training hours to comply with the state they serve as police officers. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, "Law enforcement officers receive an average of 840 hours of basic training including 168 hours of training on weapons, self-defense, and the use of force" (2016, p. 5). Teachers will not have the same training hours police officers are mandated to have by their state. Arming teachers may also introduce liability for school districts that could end up with lawsuits, and criminal liability. "State immunity laws cannot exempt schools from all legal

liability, particularly federal civil rights liability” (Everytown, 2020, p. 5). The best possibility is to focus on evidence-based intervention plans to help prevent any further incidents against innocent children.

Another legal issue and challenge that continues to affect school districts are that school personnel, and mental health professions, have a legal responsibility to communicate any exigent circumstances when any threat is involved. "Part of the challenge, Dr. Beliz said, has been educating school administrators and mental health professionals about their legal responsibilities and the exceptions in federal privacy laws that allow information to be shared in exigent circumstances — for example, when a threat is involved” (Goode, 2013, p. 2). According to Cornell Law School, the definition of Exigent circumstances is "circumstances that would cause a reasonable person to believe that entry (or other relevant prompt action) was necessary to prevent physical harm to the officers or other persons, the destruction of relevant evidence, the escape of the suspect, or some other consequence improperly frustrating legitimate law enforcement efforts." (Legal Information Institute, 2021, pg. 1). Even with exigent circumstances, school personnel is reluctant to get involved or communicate any threat information to school administrators or law enforcement officials. Under Federal law, the school districts must report any threats of harm to others to ensure the safety of all students and school personnel.

Conclusion

“The McDonald case is unlikely to be the Supreme Court’s last word on the Second Amendment, and most legal experts expect that the Court will want to clarify the implications of its ruling in future cases” (Zhang, 2010, p. 2). The cases mentioned have brought great attention to courts that clarification and rulings are needed to help citizens understand, follow and accept

these laws. Being able to focus on factors that school districts need to implement, intervene and prevent has shown better results than trying to get laws clarified or changed. Mass and school shootings might be declining but stricter and clearer laws are required to ensure the safety of our children and citizens of our country. Laws are enacted, enforced, and changed. When laws are passed, these laws can be changed because opinions are brought up about what should be legal, illegal, or because it has caused an issue. It may take some time for laws to change in years or even decades, but focusing on laws and relying on the government will not stop these horrifying attacks. It is important to focus and evaluate requirements, recommendations, and lessons learned to help school districts implement what works for their district, what works for one might not work for another to prevent or protect students.

Chapter 3: Recommendations, Preventions, and Conclusions

The aftermath of many school shootings offers important lessons that have identified significant issues and the difficulty of facing these incidents. Though there is a certainty of the evidence, much more evidence is needed. This research review found that no plan or training in place will prevent any school shooting from being planned by any attacker. At the beginning of this research, the focus was on school safety planning, procedures, and training. As research was furthered examined it was found that school district administrators and politicians have missed the most important component of all, the building of relationships with students. In many school shooting attacks, the attacker was bullied, harassed, or was suffering from a type of mental health illness, or was treated with no respect by a teacher or student while attending school. The importance of preventing children from taking any kind of revenge is to build a relationship with students and provide a nurturing environment. It is the responsibility of all school personnel to know and understand their roles and responsibilities in working with students. Most school

district administrators and politicians have focused on laws, training, and safety planning, but they are leaving behind the most important, the students. The education world does not provide a perfect world, humanity lives in a realistic world where catastrophic incidents happen. School districts must understand that no plan or policy in place can prevent an intruder from taking action on innocent lives.

Providing safety to all students that attend schools must be the factor for all leaders. Leaders and states should not only focus on security measures, policy, procedures, training, and safety plans. Taking into consideration that the environment school personnel provides is essential for all students. Being able to provide the needs for students, paying attention, and listening to our youths is an important contribution that will make a difference in student's behaviors and the violence on school grounds. School personnel must be ready to face any challenges that are present to ensure the safety of all students. Sometimes evidence provided in the investigations showed that school shooters were bullied by athletes or honor students and special privileges to these students and this helped the attacker plan and get revenge for their hurt and anger. Unique resources have been implemented that have helped with school shooting situations, but these resources should not be the attention in place. These resources have proven to help, but not stop these horrific crimes. The focus is on improving the school climates.

Arming teachers is one law out of many enacted to help with school shooting attacks. Some school districts have allowed teachers to carry firearms in schools. "In fact, an armed teacher cannot, in a moment of extreme duress and confusion, be expected to transform into a specially trained law enforcement officer" (Everytown, 2019, p.1). Teachers are not trained to face any violent intruder that enters a school or building. This may cause many issues for school districts, for example, costs of training, extensive training, policies in place on securing the

firearm, accidental shootings, and must receive training when employees respond to law enforcement officials when they take over the scene. “Law enforcement officers receive an average of 840 hours of basic training including 168 hours of training on weapons, self-defense, and the use of force” (Everytown, 2019, p. 1). Being able to implement evidence-based prevention and intervention plans and listening to student outcries and warning signs will help in protecting American schools.

Communication is a key component in the education world, if school personnel is communicating warning signs, changed behavior in students can help to intervene and prevent any deadly incident from taking place. "Given that most shooters gave some indication of their plans to others, their analysis suggests the key to prevention is being able to recognize warnings and cries for help, and being able to intervene with appropriate measures" (Kupchik et al., 2015, p. 1121). Any school district that may have communication issues may be a life or death situation. Communication plays an immense role in any school shooting situation and has been a failure in many school shootings. School administrators must identify any communication hurdles in their plans and make the necessary changes to prepare for any incidents. In many school shootings, warning signs were made available through drawings, verbal and non-verbal communication, and no one could report the signs and this lead to deadly attacks. Setting communication practices in place will build strong relationships and a safe learning environment and can help in preventing any future attacks.

These horrific events have continued to harm society. Educators, parents, and communities entrust schools with the safety and wellbeing of the children that attend local schools. However, students and parents are worried and terrified that there could be a possibility that one day a school attacker may enter a school and take many innocent lives. The focus of this

research review was to assist students, administrators, and staff personnel understand the importance of an entire landscape into how a school shooting attacker's outlook can affect a school where innocent people attend. In this research, many roadblocks were encountered, for example, enacted laws, school personnel, resources, mental health issues, and politicians, and these roadblocks must be considered for any future studies to ensure the safety, prevention, and intervention of any further school shooting massacres.

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