

## Are the Kids Alright? Student Reflections on School Shootings

Educator Barnes – 3/3/18

If an event is taking place out in the world, I want my students to know my classroom is a safe space for them to discuss those situations inside our classroom. As a literacy coach and teacher, it is important I give my students the time to process and reflect before we have discussions. To give students processing time, I typically have them write their thoughts down first. I allow them to bounce ideas off of their neighbors, but I also keep a timer to remind them to manage the time they allot for idea sharing, so they have time to finish their writing.

Recently, my students wrote and reflected about the school shooting in Parkland, Florida. Below, are excerpts from their reflections.

*“This can happen everywhere not only in Florida. To stop this from happening, I think teachers should stop acting dumb. I know they see students getting bullied and they never do nothing. I think there should be professional officers in all schools. I think they should check backpacks every day. They should also bring dogs so they can smell if there something hiding in people pockets.”*

*“I fear a lot being at school because there’s so much bullying and stuff going on. We may never know what someone in our school is feeling or thinking at the time. I don’t actually feel we need to give our teachers guns because that wouldn’t do anything because a student would get a hold of it then that would cause an even bigger problem.”*

*“I fear that this will happen again. In Indiana, people always have guns even illegally. We should let teachers have guns in schools to protect other students from school shootings. If they have guns, they would be able to kill or scare off the intruder.”*

*“We should make everyone get searched before they come into the school. We should also have meetings about school shootings and the consequences of bringing a gun to school. We should have a day when a person who was once in jail for bringing a weapon to school speak to us to persuade us not to do it. We could learn how their life changed because of their poor decision.”*

*“I’m concerned for my own safety. It could happen in Indiana. In fact, it could happen anywhere. The school can prevent this by having gun detectors in the future and by always keeping school doors locked.”*

*“My fears that I have for the students in Parkland, Florida is that they are never going to be comfortable in a school setting anymore and might even have to go to therapy. I think that this won’t happen in Indiana because we know better. One thing that we should do to prevent this is to put police officers on each door to ensure we are not*

*letting people in that don't belong in school. To be protected, we should report any student that talks about harming the school and other students."*

*"I feel so sorry for the parents who lost their children in that shooting. It's so sad that you can't even go to school no more and feel safe. I don't think it'll happen in Indiana, but you never know because people are crazy."*

*"I think the main problem is bullying. I see students being bothered by people everyday, and I don't see any teachers do anything. Teachers are so busy worrying about the people who are joking around with each other and horseplaying that they don't pay attention to the kids being bothered by other students. If we could stop bullying all together, I think that the shooting would have never happened."*

*"Something different schools could do is get better security. They could also get all schools bulletproof windows. We need to be smart and stop letting kids be able to buy guns at 18. I feel like you should be older than that because that's not a reasonable age to be able to have that."*

*"Something like that could happened in Indiana because nowadays kids don't care. They think it's cute to do anything. I'm very scared because I don't know what might happen. School not even safe no more."*

*"The fear that school shooting brings me is that I could die and not complete my dreams and goals. It would also bring pain to my friends and my family because my family cares about me and shows me love. I think it could happen in Indy because evil is everywhere and the way to prevent this is to have teachers armed after passing their shooting test. It should be required for teachers to pass a shooting test to become school teachers. I get so sad for the parents that suffer because of their kids' death because no family deserves that."*

When I read the responses and discussed the shooting with my students, the question, "Are the kids alright?" popped into my mind. The answer is no and students know it. They know not only are some of their classmates not okay, they might also be struggling emotionally.

It saddened me to hear my students say teachers are not doing enough to help with bullying and that schools are not taking common sense safety measures to ensure doors are locked and people are not finding unsecured entry points. What broke my heart the most was the hopeless undercurrent in some of their responses where they think nothing else will work except arming their teachers.

I always say if you want to improve a school, you have to be tuned in to your students. They know what is really going on. They know how people are able to sneak off or on to campus. They are on social media reading disturbing posts by current or former classmates. They see students getting bullied and they know which teachers will see it and go back into their classrooms like nothing happened.

As an educator, who is also a parent, I want the kids to be alright. And, I want the grown-ups to listen and support students and work with them to help make schools a safer place for everyone.