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March 1, 2018 by Inservice Guest Blogger (<http://inservice.ascd.org/author/admin/>)

The Power of Student Voice: Join Us and Act Now

My entire career has been devoted to fostering student voice—to ensuring that students' thoughts, ideas, and passions are an integral part of school change efforts. Out of all the things students can lend their voices to in schools, I never anticipated that one of the most powerful student-driven movements would be an impassioned plea to stop gun violence in schools.

I must start by acknowledging that I wrote several previous drafts of this blog. I was not comfortable with any of them, and I figured out why. School violence is an uncomfortable topic. Gun control is a polarizing issue. It is not possible to fully and effectively address every aspect of school violence in a single blog. But address it we must, and students are leading the way.

To start, students are showing us that stopping gun violence is not a political issue. The current movement is about so much more than being on the left or the right. It is about saving lives. As one student's sign at a protest march aptly declared, "Your thoughts and prayers are not enough." There is too much political rhetoric about gun violence, and too little action taken to actually establish policies that addresses it. We need to pay less attention to political leanings and a lot closer attention to what students are saying about the current crisis of violence in our schools.

The very reason schools exist is for students. School should be a place they arrive at every morning with a sense of hope and motivation. A place where they are inspired to achieve their very best—personally, socially, and academically. Students' greatest concern should be challenging themselves to make the most of their unique abilities. They should feel confident that the learning environment will be engaging, supportive, respectful—and safe.

In order to make schools that engaging and safe place, we need to ask students what they need. Their voices provide invaluable insights into their experiences: which aspects of the learning environment are productive and which are pointless, which strategies make an impact and which fall flat, what unites students and what divides them. Students' insights are the key to effective change. Their collective voice has demonstrated the need to address gun control and mental illness on a systemic level. In addition, educators must listen to the voices that reflect the unique needs within their own schools. We need to stand side-by-side with our students—listening, learning, and leading with them to determine the best way forward for each school community. When adults truly collaborate with students, meaningful change can happen—in schools and in society.

Students have shown us that their voices are incredibly influential during a time of crisis. That should not be the only time their voices are valued. Their voices should impact school choices every day: course offerings, instructional strategies, hiring process of teachers, development of school policies, lunch menus, and co-curricular opportunities, to name a few. We know that when students have a voice in school, they are seven times more likely to be motivated to learn. Students' ability to share their opinions, offer realistic suggestions for the good of the whole, and be part of the solution to stopping school violence is remarkable. And the strength of their voices should not be acknowledged only in challenging times. Student voice needs to become a natural way of being in schools, with everyday influence.

The potential of student voice to impact change should not be underestimated. Of all the issues students can lend their voices to, right now they are unequivocally saying that they want to be safe in their schools. They are not waiting to find exactly the right words or to know all the answers. They are not pausing to assess exactly the "right" time to take action. They are demanding that policy makers do *something* to stop school violence now, and they want to be part of the solution. Students are leading by example. Adults must join them, lending their own voices and working collaboratively to create change.

Dr. Quaglia is an author of numerous best-selling books including *Student Voice: The Instrument of Change*, and *Engagement by Design*. He is also an author of ASCD's first children's book, *Cay and Adlee Find Their Voice* (<http://www.ascd.org/Publications/Books/Overview/Cay-and-Adlee-Find-Their-Voice.aspx>). Dr. Quaglia will be doing a luncheon keynote at ASCD Empower18: The Conference for **Every** Educator (<http://empower.ascd.org/Default.aspx>) entitled *Student Voice: Triumphs and Tribulations*.

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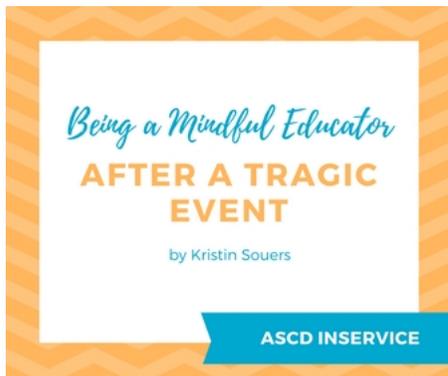
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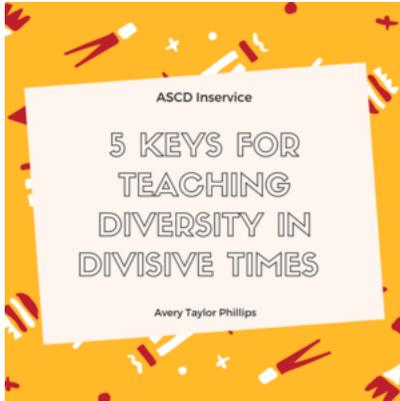
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dangerdare • 3 days ago

Since 1950, all but six U.S. mass public shootings have happened in areas where general citizens were banned from having guns. And in Europe, every single mass public shooting has occurred where guns are banned. (<http://www.foxnews.com/opin...>)

ARM THE TEACHERS

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dangerdare • 3 days ago

Students need to be taught the Constitution of the United States. There are two ways to amend it and that is how this needs to be discussed. I do not believe that the news networks want us to talk about this rationally. They want us to yell and scream at each other. Our founding fathers designed a near perfect solution to this, we just have to understand it and work the process. I for one know that even if these criminals didn't have a gun they would find another way to harm us. As a Dad, Grandfather, Husband, Marine and current High School Teacher I believe that Deputizing Educators that volunteer to train with our Law Enforcement is the answer. Care to discuss? No name calling or yelling. Let's just talk this through. I've been thinking and planning for 10 years.

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