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# UPDATE...

May 2018

## Legislature needs to finish critical work

It appears possible the Legislature will come back to deal with at least some unfinished business before the July 1 start of the new fiscal year, but no date has been given and there is still disagreement over key initiatives.

Meanwhile those facing critical deadlines, including public schools, have come together to urge action.

School boards and superintendents took the lead on the issue back in April, sending out a legislative alert to members when a House vote failed to extend the session to finish critical business – a vote that usually is perfunctory.

That alert brought a strong response from House and Senate members and led the Department of Education to establish a fallback plan, which while appreciated, raises its own concern.

The association's response reads:

*Still in limbo is L.D. 1869, An Act To Establish the Total Cost of Education and the State and Local Contributions to Education for Fiscal Year 2018-19, which essentially sets the minimum local mill rate and authorizes state subsidy to go out to schools after the start of the new fiscal year on July 1.*

*If the Legislature fails to return and pass the bill, the Department of Education has determined there is an administrative solution to get the money out. The concern is the precedent it would set to have the Legislature cede authority for authorizing school funding to the executive branch.*

*Funding for public education should be in the hands of legislators who represent the taxpayers, parents, teachers and students in their districts. GPA should not be an executive branch decision.*

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## Preventing and dealing with school attack



More than 200 people attend safety conference

Improving safety in schools and preventing disruptive or violent incidents start with creating a culture where basic security measures are taken seriously and school staff listen to what their students have to tell them.

That was the message during a five-hour security seminar sponsored by MSSA and put on by national security consultants from TRC, who assess and help prevent a wide range of threats in the private and public sector, including public schools and colleges.

More than 200 people attended the May 22 seminar including superintendents, board members, principals, counselors, school resource officers, and facility directors.

They were told it doesn't have to cost a lot of money to make schools safer, but it does require school leaders to create a "security culture," where simple rules like not propping locked doors open out of convenience have to be enforced.

Access control i.e. one point of entry where people need to be identified, not just buzzed through, is critical.

### Lower-cost safety tips

The consultants affirmed the biggest safety risk isn't from an active shooter although incidents have increased. Nationally there were 14 active shooters reported in 2007 as compared to 30 in 2017. Those 30 include mass shootings inside and outside of schools.

There have been three mass school shootings to date in 2018. On

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## County Teachers of the Year



DOE photo

The Maine County Teachers of the Year were announced in May and the winners were honored at a ceremony in the Statehouse Hall of Flags.

The program recognizes and honors the contributions of Maine's public classroom teachers, creates a greater public awareness of the teaching profession, inspires and motivates future and current teachers and promotes teacher leadership. One of the County Teachers of Year will be selected Teacher of the Year.

The winners were selected by a panel of teachers, principals, and business and community leaders, and they will continue to participate in an intensive selection process to determine next year's State Teacher of the Year.

**Androscoggin:** Katie Toothaker, Minot Consolidated School  
**Aroostook:** Bill Guerrette, Presque Isle Middle School  
**Cumberland:** Connie Russell, Mabel Wilson School  
**Franklin:** Jessica Ellingwood, Spruce Mountain High School  
**Hancock:** Jennifer Farnham, Hancock Grammar School  
**Kennebec:** Katy Jones, Winslow Junior High School  
**Knox:** Anthony Lufkin, Friendship Village School, Prescott Memorial School, Union Elementary  
**Lincoln:** Daniel Hupp, Great Salt Bay Community School  
**Oxford:** Jessica McGreevy, Oxford Hills Middle School  
**Penobscot:** Shana Goodall, Orono High School  
**Piscataquis:** Joseph Hennessey, Piscataquis Community High School  
**Sagadahoc:** Christine Del Rossi, Mt. Ararat High School  
**Somerset:** Patti Champagne, Bloomfield Elementary  
**Waldo:** David Coffey, Belfast Area High School and Troy Howard Middle School  
**Washington:** Kailee Colbeth, Washington Academy  
**York:** Kristin Klin, Bonny Eagle Middle School

### Preventing and dealing with school attack

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Jan. 23, a student in Benton, Kentucky, killed two of his fellow students and injured 19 others. On February 14, 17 people were killed at a high school in Parkland, Florida, and 10 were killed in Santa Fe, Texas, just over a month later. Closer to home, police intervened on May 29 when a man in Rockland, who does not fit the typical profile, reportedly said the voices in his head told him to do a school shooting. Guns were seized from his home, which was in sight of the local elementary school.

More likely are situations of workplace violence – a spouse or angry parent attacking a school employee; vandalism; theft; and bomb threats. Regarding workplace violence, all threats should be taken seriously, but those where a specific individual is named have a higher likelihood of occurring.

The most effective approach to school violence, in general, the consultants said, is to make security a visible priority. A designated person needs to walk around, every day, and check that doors are locked, or people aren't congregating in places they don't belong.

Some basic security suggestions include:

- Sidewalks and fencing should direct visitors
- One controlled point of entry
- Trimming shrubs and trees to keep a line of sight
- Locked doors
- Door lock check every day
- Working panic buttons
- Weapons prohibition policies
- Maintenance of security equipment, including outdoor lighting
- Building opening/closing procedures
- Security drills
- School security committee

A general tip was school property should be maintained, inside and out. Property that is in disrepair makes it look like nobody is watching and makes a school more vulnerable to theft or trespass.

### **Listen to Students**

In the case where an active shooter has come on school grounds, it is typically a male, in his mid-teens to early 20s, and he has a grievance.

“There is a perception that somebody just snapped. It just doesn't happen that way,” said Larry Fitzgerald of TRC's Augusta office. “It is a response to a series of events or an event. They feel aggrieved. Sometimes it is mental illness, but a lot of times it is not. Bullying is a big trigger.”

The best resources for identifying a troubled young person are students.

There are anonymous reporting applications that allow students to share concerns without being branded a tattle-tale. They are used for bullying prevention, signs of depression, drug and alcohol abuse and safety concerns. A key, TRC said, is for school staff to close the loop when an anonymous communication comes in so students know they've been heard.

Social media also plays a role and should be monitored. Again, students can be one of the best sources for what's being put up by potentially troubled individuals. Communication between students and staff is key.

Hiring a School Resource Officer also was high on the list, not just as a police presence but as someone who knows what's going on with students in the community and at home.

### **Spending Money**

There were questions and suggestions on how much and what kind of security equipment a school district should consider.

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## Generation Why Students find their voice in the wake of tragedy

*Story by Glenn Cook*

On Valentine’s Day, Lucy Calderon and Cameron Daniel saw how a “close-to-home story” could take on a much larger scale. That’s when a gunman walked into Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, and opened fire, killing 14 students and three teachers in just 6 minutes and 30 seconds.

As student journalists at duPont Manual High School in Louisville, Kentucky, Calderon and Daniel were working on a feature story about a school shooting in a neighboring county. Three weeks before, on Jan. 23, two students were killed and 19 injured when a 15-year-old boy opened fire in an open area at Marshall County High School.

“After Parkland happened, we knew this was so much bigger than we anticipated, and it was something we were dealing with in a place that’s close to where we live,” Calderon says. “Parkland has changed everything.”

For Calderon, Daniel, and countless other youth across the nation, the Stoneman Douglas shooting and its aftermath represent a tipping point for student activism and civic engagement. No longer content to sit on the sidelines, these students—led by Parkland survivors — are marching and protesting at a rate not seen since the Vietnam War.

Over the past three months, students have walked out of schools across the U.S. on two occasions — for 17 minutes on the one-month anniversary of the Parkland shooting and on the anniversary of the Columbine High School tragedy. More than 1 million participated in the March 24 student-led “March for Our Lives” protests in the nation’s capital and at 800 other sites around the world.

“Young people are tired of not having a voice,” says Charles Haynes, senior scholar at the First Amendment Center in Washington, D.C. “They’re frustrated. Even in good schools, they don’t feel like their voice is being taken seriously, that administrators and the powers that be condescend to them and write them off. And they have a lot to say.”

### **RIPPING OFF THE SCAB**

Today’s high school students weren’t even born when 14 people were killed at Columbine High School on April 20, 1999. Since then, more than 150,000 students in 43 states have experienced a shooting at school, according to a *Washington Post* analysis.

“The fact that we’ve grown up this way, coming to expect this to happen, is disgusting,” says Daniel, a senior. “We’ve had dozens of threats at my school in the four years I’ve been there, and it’s so ridiculous that this is what I have to worry about when I go to school.”

Grieving in public by pushing for changes in policy and laws, the Stoneman Douglas survivors ripped a collective scab off a host of issues — school violence, gun control and safety, arming teachers, mental health, the power of protest, race, privilege, technology and internet trolling — and thrust them into the local, state, and national spotlights.

“Everyone handles grief differently, and in a majority of communities where this has happened people have just retreated,” Calderon says. “They want the media out and they just want to be to themselves. The way Parkland is handling it, and I think they’re coping with it in the best way, is by channeling it into change. That is inspiring people across the country, even across the world, to believe, ‘Yes, we do have the ability to make that change happen.’”

Mary Beth Tinker, whose wearing of a black armband to protest the Vietnam War led to a landmark U.S. Supreme Court case on students’ free speech rights that bears her name (*Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District*), says she is “very encouraged to see youth turning their sadness into action and saying this is making them feel better.”

“There is some power in saying and believing ‘enough is enough,’” Tinker says. “It’s gotten to the point where students are being asked to live with a new normal, which is the threat of gun violence every moment of their lives now. It doesn’t matter where they live, what their demographic is. This is their reality, and they’re fed up.”

Ted McConnell, who heads the Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools, says the Stoneman Douglas students benefited from a Florida law that requires all middle-schoolers to take a civic learning course. The seniors who have led the #NeverAgain movement took the class two years after the law was passed.

“You have to wonder about why this particular group of students in this particular high school and in this particular community can lead this type of movement,” McConnell says. “They’ve had a superb grasp of the power of social media, and certainly they are growing up in a middle-class/upper-middle-class community that has more resources. But, at heart, they realize this is something bigger than just their community, and you can see that by their inclusion of other students who’ve experienced gun violence in urban centers.”

### **A MOVEMENT**

So, will the movement fizzle, or are the March for Our Lives and the walkouts a sign of history repeating itself?

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**Students find their voice**

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Tinker equates the push by the Stoneman Douglas students to the Birmingham Children's Crusade, the 1963 protest in which youth of all ages marched through the Alabama city. The crusade, in which hundreds of children as young as 8 were arrested, became a turning point in the civil rights movement.

"We built off the civil rights movement too, and learned a lot from that," Tinker says of the Vietnam-era protests. "These kids are building on what kids of color have been doing, whether it's DACA or the Black Lives Matter movement. They're connecting the dots, they're politically savvy, and they have a higher awareness of racial and social injustice. They're talking about how things aren't the same for everyone."

Haynes says students won't be able to maintain their momentum if "all we talk about is this mass shooting, or mass shootings, or just about guns."

"Translating their grief, their horror, in this way for changes to public policy is rare for any age group, much less young people," he says. "It really has to be more broadly about what kind of society we are living in, and how this affects people who deal with this daily. That's how you build lasting support for this type of movement."

**PEACEFUL CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE**

Mass walkouts by students draw attention, and in some cases, schools have received negative press after threatening to suspend youth who engage in peaceful demonstrations. To provide some guidance, NSBA has published "Coercion, Conscience, and the First Amendment", a downloadable document that provides information on regulating student and employee speech.

Under the standard established by the 1969 *Tinker* Supreme Court ruling, students have a constitutional right to free speech at school. However, districts can regulate speech if it "materially or substantially interferes with the operations of schools or impinges on the rights of others."

"There's something called civil disobedience in this country," says Tinker, who speaks in school districts around the country, telling her story. "If there is a moral value that you feel strongly about, you might decide to break it to take a stand, but it has to be peaceful, and you have to be willing to take the consequences. What I always tell students to ask themselves is, 'Where is the line and what are you willing to sacrifice?' It's up to each individual person. I can't tell them where that line is for anybody."

In most cases, the walkouts have been peaceful. Calderon, for example, says students at her school "did not ask permission"

from administrators to hold the March and April walkouts, but asked that they work together.

"We told them, 'This is what we're going to do. This is how it's going to be done. We want you to meet us there and help us get security and organize this,'" she says. "Now that they see all the publicity and that the students are capable, they're trusting us a lot more to express and exercise our First Amendment rights. It's been a win-win."

*Glenn Cook, a contributing editor to American School Board Journal, is a freelance writer and photographer in Northern Virginia. This article appeared in the June issue of ASBJ.*

**Legislature**

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On May 30, MSMA was part of a press conference urging action along with organizations representing direct care workers and the Maine Sheriff's Association – both of which are facing money issues come July 1.

On June 5, a second press conference has been scheduled. MSMA will be there again, along with many others including the University System and the Maine Better Transportation Association, which are advocating for the passage of bonds.

A letter signed by those groups reads in part:

"We encourage the Legislature to set a return date that will conclude business before the end of the month. This action will ensure many essential services, economic opportunities, and critical decisions by Maine businesses and agencies will continue without delay. Now is the time for Maine to show leadership to demonstrate that despite our differences we can still work together."

**Preventing and dealing with school attack**

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There was lukewarm support for cameras, largely because much of what's been installed is not part of a system that is being monitored. Cameras that simply record may help identify perpetrators of theft or vandalism, but they won't serve as an early -warning system.

And, panic buttons or any type of security equipment need to be tested regularly.

"A lot of time schools just want to put equipment in," the consultants said. "You need to take ownership of your building and determine who's going to monitor it."

As for hardening a building against an attack, TRC said it is really a matter of how much you want to spend. Participants were urged to be strategic and do the analysis between cost and effect. The facility's perimeter should be the focus in order to protect the people inside. Again, locked doors are the first priority.



If you have questions about any articles in this newsletter or suggestions for improving this publication, let us know.

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