

How to improve gun safety, at schools and in society at large

Pat Perriello | Sep. 24, 2012 NCR Today

There is [a hard-hitting editorial](#) [1] in *The Baltimore Sun* concerning gun incidents in the Baltimore County schools. The author of the editorial, Baltimore County parent Lori Brown, explores the aftermath of two recent gun incidents in county schools that have resulted in serious injury to one student. Parents are nervous and administrators are struggling to figure out what to do, but so far, the resulting efforts seem to be avoiding the obvious issue.

The conversation so far has centered on safety. Parent and administrative meetings focus on reviewing school safety plans. One wonders if custodial staff use a wax on the floors that causes students to slip and fall in the cafeteria. Brown also muses that students might be forgetting to wear their safety goggles in shop classes.

As Brown emphatically states, the issue isn't about safety -- it is about guns. It is about keeping guns out of Baltimore County schools. Yet guns are seldom mentioned. A vocal minority in our country continues to keep reasonable discussion of gun violence off the list of acceptable topics to consider. Even in the face of harm coming to students in school, no one seems comfortable suggesting specific methods for reducing access to guns by students. The community ends up skirting the actual issue as it tries to address the problem.

Brown also notes that in other areas, we expect people to be responsible for their at-risk behaviors. Examples include being required to fence in a backyard pool and pay higher homeowner insurance rates. Also, car owners are required to purchase liability insurance. Shouldn't gun owners incur additional costs related to the risks involved in gun ownership?

If Baltimore County has to install metal detectors in schools because of gun violence, who should pay for the added cost? Shouldn't gun owners pay more rather than having the tax rates rise for those who do not own guns? Brown recommends gun owners be required to purchase liability insurance. Insurance companies would then likely require such things as trigger locks, gun safes and education for gun owners.

As with most issues, change will only come when people demand it. The arguments being made against reasonable gun regulations should not be allowed to intimidate the community. It makes no sense in this country to be afraid to even discuss the issue of gun violence when it involves the safety of our children and our schools. Parents, faith-based groups and concerned citizens need to make clear that a small but vociferous gun lobby does not speak for them. Instead, they should choose to become engaged in pushing for sensible laws to reduce gun violence, especially in our schools.

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[1] <http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/opinion/oped/bs-ed-schools-guns-20120919,0,327747.story>