

Writing Samples

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## Discussion of the Issue of School Safety

### Introduction

Children of different age spend a lot of time in schools, and the adults' concerns about the younger generation's safety are not exaggerated. The goal of this essay is to estimate possible threats that children may face when they are in school.

Bullying is among the major factors that may endanger children's well-being. This form of aggression may further lead to gun violence in schools. This issue has become one of the primary reasons for concerns today. As a result, on numerous occasions, the public turned attention to the issue of gun control since it has a direct impact on violence in schools.

According to these facts, all threats that children currently face in schools are interconnected, and one problem is the result of another unsolved issue.

### Overview of the Issue

The goal of any school besides its main function, which is education, is to ensure that all students return home safely without any physical or psychological harm. If a school cannot provide safe conditions for the educational process, then it is necessary to take measures in order to make the school pay more attention to the growing issues of violence. The reaction of school should be the implementation of programs to improve students' safety. The best thing schools can do is to provide regular reviews of children's safety to define and eliminate the first signs of violence on early stages.

According to Lyons, when students are asked to mention the problems they have in school, the issue of safety exceeds other problems more than twice. The major factors about school safety that students list are fights, bullying, and guns (Lyons). Despite the students' concerns about safety in school, recent data shows that the level of violence in schools has

reduced within the last years. However, if students continue to talk a lot about this problem, it means that there are certain issues like bullying and gun violence which are still unsolved.

### **The Problem of Bullying**

One of the top problems that almost every student faces in school at least once is bullying. According to the Center for Safe Schools, during the recent years, the issue of bullying has received attention on the national level since the research shows its negative impact on the children's health state and developmental outcomes (Center for Safe Schools). As a result, every day about 160,000 of American students miss their classes because of bullying (Center for Safe Schools).

This statistics shows that all students across the country feel so unsafe in schools that they prefer not to visit it at all. As a result, children do not receive proper education which is unacceptable. Hence, the issue of bullying is far from being resolved and still requires to be addressed.

Although the research shows that the amount of traditional cases of bullying decreases every year, one of the reasons why bullying is still an acute problem is its evolutionary nature. The development of new technologies led to the appearing of new forms of bullying which have superseded the classical ones. The new forms of communications via various messengers and social networks make it harder to define bullying and find a suitable method of combat against it (Gateskill). Bullying of this kind causes even more damage to a victim's reputation and ego. Another negative outcome of bullying is the emotional stress which distracts students from education and makes it harder for them to achieve good academic results.

The biggest danger that bullying may bring is triggering a circle of violence. The emotional damage that a student experiences may develop into physical one. For instance, Columbine shooting was the result of bullying. Two students became victims of their peers who decided to fight back with weapons (Cullen). This case made everyone view the

problem of bullying with a new interest and raise a lot of concerns about this problem which were not taken so seriously before. This situation has demonstrated that verbal abuse may become a reason of a serious psychological disorder and, as a result, lead to physical violence and numerous victims. Taking into consideration the transition to the physical damage that students may receive at school, it is necessary to continue this discussion and raise the issue of gun violence.

### **Gun Violence in Schools**

The case of the mass shooting of the first graders in Sandy Hook school that happened in 2012 still reminds us that school safety is far from being perfect (Phippen). This event was so dramatic that the school was demolished, and a new one was built at the same place, which was supposed to become much safer. The structural and architectural features were planned in a way to make it a safer place than the previous school was. Nevertheless, even these modifications do not solve the main problem. A student with bad intentions can still carry a gun to school, and the tragedy of a mass shooting will repeat. So, the problem is not in the ability to bring weapons to school, but why students even consider causing physical damage to others.

In order to prevent the possibility of bringing weapons to educational facilities, many schools have installed metal detectors and even hired security guards. Another measure was directed towards social-reform programs (Brodsky). Among them is the implementation of a restorative-justice model. According to this approach, school administration brings together victims of bullying and their offenders, so they could find a solution to the cause of their problems and solve them through meetings and discussion (Brodsky).

This preventive strategy predetermines two directions. On the one hand, it significantly reduces the possibility of bringing weapons to school and inflict physical harm on students. On the other hand, this strategy creates a culture of safety and mutual understanding, where aggression and violence have fewer chances to arise.

Another factor which demonstrates that schools' administrations view the issue of gun violence seriously is the fact that some schools have already adopted preparations for a shooting event. All these preventive measures have become a matter of life, especially after the tragedy in Columbine High School in 1999. Today, all schools across the country adopt a range of measures to prevent this type of violence. The threat of shooting is not considered as an exception, and as it may happen again in one of American schools, the issue of gun control and the methods of violence prevention are still open.

### **Reflection on Gun Control**

The efforts with which schools try to reduce and prevent violence in education facilities indeed improve the safety culture and make the relations between students better. However, all these attempts will be in vain if a stranger with a gun decides to enter a school and arrange shooting. In such case, only metal detectors and well-trained security guards will be the only barrier preventing a tragedy in school. Taking this possibility into consideration, another question arises: why a person with such intentions has an opportunity to get a gun?

Hence, the issue of shooting in a school is also the consequence of a gun control problem. Sandy Hook states that today gun manufacturers prosper increasing the volume of guns selling, though they could pay a bit more attention and invest in research in order to make weapons safer and smarter. Access to weapons should also be restricted to avoid the customers who are not responsible enough to buy a gun (Obama).

According to this fact, the issue of bullying in schools, as well as the threat of shooting, is the secondary problem, while the main issue is the gun control on a national level. Hence, if one could provide a more effective gun control, it would reduce the general gun violence in the United States, and as a result, the rate of shooting in schools as well because these both issues are interconnected.

## Conclusion

The analysis of school violence has shown that currently there exist two major problems which are bullying and gun violence. Bullying is viewed as an initial point which makes some students take some radical measures and resort to guns as one of the most effective methods of solving the problem according to their view. Fortunately, the huge attention of schools to this issue which is presented via meetings and training leading to the decreasing of bullying level.

The problem of gun violence can be solved only partly by schools because all attempts at providing metal detectors and security guards can reduce the consequences of the problem, but not the problem itself. The main issue is that the weapons are easy to get, especially for those who should not have access to it. Hence, school violence will still be an unsolvable issue until more strict gun control is implemented on a national level.

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