

Historic moment for high schoolers

Will teens who have always faced the risk of mass shootings maintain activism?

BY JACQUIELYNN FLOYD

For high school students across the country, recent days have offered a stark lesson in political activism, led by grieving teens from the latest American school to fall victim to mass shooting.

Galvanized high school kids have become the centerpiece in our seemingly unending argument over the prevalence of guns in our society. Teenagers have staged demonstrations in scores of communities, and at least three major anti-gun observances specifically inviting student participation are scheduled in the weeks to come.

At least one Texas school district, as you perhaps heard, is having none of it. In a pre-emptive message posted on social media and sent to parents, the superintendent for schools in Needville, southwest of Houston, warned that kids participating in any kind of demonstration during class hours would face suspension.

"All will be suspended for 3 days and parent notes will not

alleviate the discipline," wrote Superintendent Curtis Rhodes. "A disruption of the school will not be tolerated."

The district's Facebook page was abruptly shut down Thursday. Perhaps someone pointed out that students at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High in Parkland, Florida, where 17 people were shot to death on Valentine's Day, endured a disruption that pales in comparison to a student walkout.

The issue raises some questions, however, and poses something of a headache for school districts trying to balance students' concerns at a pivotal moment in our national debate with the workaday need to jam physics and French verbs into their noggins.

A quick survey of the biggest school districts in the Dallas area found that some have a policy ready to go. Others are waiting to find out what kind of events are planned, and — perhaps — whether this movement loses steam in the coming weeks, in the all-too-familiar pattern of political concern and



AP / EVAN VUCCI

Sydney Acuff, 16, of Maryland, and other students protest for gun-control legislation on Wednesday in front of the White House.

popular activism after other gun massacres in recent years.

Three main nationwide events have been planned with student participation in mind.

The March For Our Lives is scheduled for March 24, a Saturday, but two weekday events could conflict with school schedules. The March 14 National School Walkout falls on a Wednesday. The National High School Walkout has been called for Friday, April 20. That one

will fall the 19th anniversary of the shooting at Columbine High School in Colorado, regarded as the nation's horrifying introduction to the modern era of school gun massacres.

Many of us have clear recollections of the horror at Columbine. I went to Colorado to report in the days following the massacre, and the community's shock and grief left an impression I will never forget.

For many of the young peo-

ple involved in this new wave of activism, however, Columbine is more than a lifetime ago. The threat of mass shooting in schools isn't a modern horror; it has been on their radar their entire lives.

It is impossible to predict whether the protests will lose steam as quickly as their predecessors. Older activists, frustrated by political stonewalling and shouted down by opponents of any gun regulations, keep falling into resignation — until the next tragedy.

It's just possible that high school kids will turn out to be the unexpected agents of sustained momentum. If students remain as committed to seeking change on April 20, the anniversary of that landmark tragedy, as they were this past week, they will have broken ground in our deadlocked gun debate.

And should they remain that committed, it's doubtful that their first concern will be the consequences of skipping school. After Parkland, maybe that's the least of their worries.

Jacquelynne Floyd is a columnist with *The Dallas Morning News*.



GETTY IMAGES / JOE RAEDLE

Maddy Wilford, who was shot three times on Feb. 14 at Florida's Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, seen with her mother, Missy Wilford, on Monday at Broward Health North hospital.

needed for target shooting or hunting. They should not be allowed outside of their original military purpose.

Think of how many young lives would have been saved if the school shooter in Florida had to push bullets into the

weapon one at a time. In Florida, the shooter fired more than 100 rounds. This would have been impossible without bullet-filled clips.

This ban would give survivors a chance to rush these maniacs and take the weapons

away, stopping the killing after only a few shots.

Everyone should focus on this one achievable restriction.

Tom Colangelo,
Dix Hills



Some suggestions to prevent school shootings are not realistic, such as arming teachers.

I have an alternative. Every year, America has soldiers returning from deployment overseas. These men and women have some of the best training.

Every day, we hear of the post-traumatic stress they suffer after discharge, or difficulty finding jobs or assimilating back into society. With minimal training, these valuable Americans could become reliable assets in our schools.

Raymond P. Moran,
Massapequa Park



Most Israeli schools have just one unlocked entrance,

and it is usually staffed by an armed guard.

It's time for the United States to follow Israel's lead. Unfortunately, this is the reality that we must now face.

Ed Quinlan,
New Hyde Park

Parking also an issue at Stony Brook U.

The Feb. 20 news story "Playing the placard card," about parking permits that have gotten out of hand in New York City, has a parallel at Stony Brook University.

My husband has been taking courses in the senior audit program at Stony Brook, which allows retirees to audit classes for a small fee. As part of that program, he was given a hangtag once a year to park in any faculty or staff lot.

When he went to renew the permit this year, he was told the university is replacing tags with stickers good for just one

semester at a time. The staff member explained that the campus has a plague of hangtags; she said about 16,000 are renewed every year, and the university wants to winnow them down. The campus has nearly 26,000 students.

To target the senior audit program, which is small, seems petty.

His first semester, my husband had to pay \$10 a day to park until he was able to get a hangtag. He spent more than the cost of one of the classes just for parking.

Therese Madonia,
Farmingville

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