April 17, 2014

On the morning of Wednesday, April 9, a 16 year-old student in Murrysville, PA brandished two knives in the minutes before school started, ultimately wounding 20 students and staff. There is no news story that is more heartbreaking than those of school violence. Our schoolhouses have long been a symbol of acceptance and support, and when we hear stories of students becoming victims of violence it shakes a nation. In this same week, the North Carolina Department of Public released the 2012-2013 Consolidated Data Report which analyses crime, violence, and suspension/expulsions at our state’s schools.

The good news is that the reported number of crimes and school place violence decreased nearly 5 percent from 2011-2012, even as our school population grew. In all, there were 10,630 reported crimes and incidents of violence on public school campuses in North Carolina. 3,427, or 32 percent, of these cases were possession of weapons, 45 incidents were assault with a deadly weapon, and 1,143 (11 percent) were assaults on staff members. The number of these reportable acts ranged from 27 crimes per 1,000 students in Surry County to 0 reported acts in Clay County.

However, other indicators show an alarming trend developing. The most recent report on nationwide school violence published by the Center for Disease

Featured Educator

This month’s IEI Featured Educator is Tamera Houchard. As the Curriculum Specialist for Mitchell County Schools, Houchard shares her love of learning with students across the county. Providing a safe and supportive environment in which students can be successful remains her life’s work. Read more here.

Featured Action

Feeling inspired after the 2014 Emerging Issues Forum? Ready to take what you hear at the Forum and bring action to your school, community or district? Thanks to the Belk Foundation, IEI is launching a
Control shows that 9.1 percent of our students were threatened or injured with a weapon in 2011. This number is up 35 percent from the previous two years, and more than 20 percent higher than the national average. In this same year, 6.1 percent for North Carolina’s high school students reported that they carried a weapon to school for protection, 13 percent higher than the national average.

These findings demonstrate how a school’s climate has the potential to affect student outcomes. Fearing their school environment distracts students from learning, both inside and outside of school. If students are discovered with weapons they face automatic explosion, derailing their academic career and putting them at a much higher risk of never completing their education. Additionally, it requires schools to reroute funds to security measures, siphoning much needed resources from academic programs.

Everyday incidences of bullying, harassment, and physical intimidation in schools impact entire communities, driving kids out of public schools and destroying faith in public education. Organizations like Community in Schools - North Carolina are partnering with communities across the state to organize activities that bring mentors into schools to provide conflict resolution, gang prevention programs, and...
service-learning to enable students to create a safe and positive atmosphere for student learning.

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Do you know a teacher who is working hard to help students succeed? Let us know, and s/he could be featured in the next education issue!