

the news of the past

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"The only way to stop a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun,"

This quote from an article in the US news in December just days after the shooting deaths of 20 children in Sandy Hook Connecticut makes my heart heavy. More conversations have erupted in response to recommendations that all schools have an armed security guard on site at all times. Well meaning vigilantes showing up outside schools in full military combat gear may do more to scare children than to make them feel safe. How will they know the good guys from the bad guys? Certainly not by clothing, hair color, skin color or any other distinguishing characteristics. What are they supposed to do? Take the gunman's word for it? Ever ask a pedophile if he is a good guy or a bad guy? Guess what the answer would be?

This thinking fits with "The only way to stop a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun,". What should the good guy do, wear a badge?

So, we arm out schools â then what? What do we do about the newly hired security guard who left his gun in the washroom of the school? What could have happened? What about the results from the â National Gun Dayâ across the USA that reports that 5 people were accidentally shot or injured from a gun being accidentally discharged on this day of gun celebration?

We need forward thinkers to help us THINK our way out of this. While I don't have an immediate solution to this problem because of its complexity and the emotions around gun ownership in the US, I know that more guns is not the answer. More violence is not the answer. However, it may be true that, had guns NOT been so accessible in Sandy Hook on that December day, 20 plus families would have had a family Christmas that would be remembered with joy and abundance rather than sadness, heartbreak and tragic loss.

This is a good question, particularly in times when governments are passing legislation and Ministerial orders around the issue of school safety and anti bullying. What is a safe school? What does it look like? Who determines whether or not a school is safe? It seems to me that our clients â the kids â should be the gauges we use to determine how safe our students feel in our schools. In order to find out this important information, we need to ASK our kids, on a regular basis, how safe they feel in the different areas of our schools.

Simple surveys can provide fast feedback. Online polling options such as www.poll Everywhere.com provide immediate real time feedback for teachers in classrooms, and give students a voice. Caution needs to be taken to be sure that the students know that this information is being used to inform and make decisions about building a safe and caring school environment. Expectations for feeling safe should be outlined, and students should be aware of the consequences of behaving in a manner that makes others feel unsafe. Finally, faculty all need to be on board in terms of noticing when unsafe or unfriendly behaviours are occurring in hallways, classrooms, cafeterias and other school areas.

As we begin our new school years, educators and parents should be hyper aware of kids who do not appear to be making a smooth adjustment, and practices need to be put in place to be sure that school FEEL safe for our kids. Our schools are indeed safe when our most vulnerable of students tells us that they love coming to school, and feel safe anywhere within the school.

Wednesday, 25 July 2012 00:51 July 17 â Mail Online (dailymail.uk.co)

â Nicola Brookes, 45, was targeted by internet trolls after posting message of support for X-Factor contestant Frankie Cocozza. The mother, who doesn't even watch X-Factor, wrote message supporting singer on his official Facebook page after her daughter showed her his page. Abusers created fake profile with her picture and posted sick messagesâ that displayed Ms. Brookes as a very unsavory person. The abuse continued over some time. In a court case, for the first time, Facebook has been ordered to reveal the identities of these people, and Ms. Brookes currently plans to pursue legal action against them under the Malicious Communications Act.

â Last week the High Court granted an order compelling the site to disclose the bulliesâ names, email addresses and their computersâ internet protocol (IP) addresses, which can be used to determine a computerâ s location.â

Although Facebook has policy which make is illegal to create a profile using someone elseâ s name (see the Phoebe Prince story), this is the first time Facebook has been ordered to provide identities in a legal challenge by an individual. This has been a long process, and luckily for Ms. Brookes, the law firm representing her agreed to fight this for free. Facebook policy says that they will remove offensive material, however it is their up to their discretion as to what they define as offensive. What do you think should happen?

Saturday, 07 July 2012 23:27

Bus Kids Bullying Bus Drivers â Who is Responsible for Safety?

The recent media story of 68 year old school bus driver Karen Klein being bullied and badgered by some middle school students while riding the bus bring to light some very serious safety concerns. There is no doubt that these students seriously crossed the line of unacceptable behavior, and reports say that the students accepted responsibility, accepted the consequences and agreed to releasing the story to the public. All of this is commendable, and we hope that these students have learned a life long lesson. As well, it appears that Ms. Klein has garnered support throughout North America and beyond for having to tolerate such a desperate situation. However, for just a moment, it might be worthwhile exploring what COULD have happened, and wondering where the blame would lie. These tormentors were alleged to have continued their abuse for up to 10 minutes. One student taunted: "You don't have a family because they all killed themselves because they

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don't want to be near you." As it turns out, Klein's oldest son killed himself 10 years ago. Imagine how those thoughtless comments hit home for Karen Klein.

It was reported that Klein was crying at one point because the tormenting was so hurtful. Imagine that her tearful eyes interrupted her vision to the point that led to an accident. Imagine that one of the students had been hurt, or worse. Who would be responsible? What liability does a School District have in such situations? What policies are in place to be pro-active should violence and intimidating behaviours break out directed against the bus driver? While riding the school bus is considered a necessity for transportation of students who live outside walk limits, perhaps it should be considered a privilege. It may be time to ask parents and school district to step up and make sure our bus drivers are safe, with procedures in place to avoid any tragedies. What do you think?

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