Little Things – School Shootings And Teasing Essay, Research Paper

Introduction- Examples of shootings related to teasing and solutions to problem

I. Change Atmosphere

A. Assailants generally rejected

B. Psychological damage

C. Led to kill tormentors

D. Quotes from others

1) Re: Columbine and its shooters- ?at least?took a stand?

2) ??it did take guts?

3) ??Maybe it?ll make people think next time??

II. Students responsibility

A. Intentions always told to peers

1) Usually detailed

2) Rarely taken seriously or reported

B. Bethel, Alaska story

C. Is it worth risking the lives of the potential victims to protect a reputation?

III. Teachers take responsibility

A. Listen to students

B. Look for signs

C. Don?t ignore ?harmless teasing?

D. Great Barrington, Massachusetts

E. Take threats seriously

Conclusion- Advancements are there, but there is a long way to go and everyone needs to step up

Little Things

Sixteen year old Nicholas Elliot of Virginia Beach, Virginia opened fire on his school with a semi automatic pistol in 1987, he said someone had called him a racist name. Fourteen year old James Alan Kearby of Goddard, Kansas killed the principal and three others within his school on January twenty- first of 1985. Afterward he reported that he had been brutally bullied and beaten for years proceeding the shooting. After being teased about his weight twelve year old Nathan Farris of DeKalb, Missouri shot a classmate and then himself on 1987. In 1997 fourteen year old Joseph Todd of Stamps, Arkansas shot two students, he claimed to have been humiliated by teasing. (Dedman: ?Bullying, Tormenting Often Led to Revenge in Cases Studied?). This merciless teasing tarnishes the souls and reputations of its victims driving them to kill. Adolescents are victims of more crimes then any other age group in the U.S. (Furlong). Even though our federal, state, and local governments all address this issue with numerous laws and policies, there continues to be three million crimes committed in America?s public schools annually (Yell). Because searches and metal detectors do not appear to be effective, it is time to move away from intervention and start working on prevention. The first major step in the right direction is to change the atmosphere within the school. After this has been accomplished, the next task at hand is to train the students and staff to handle effectively, potentially dangerous situations when one arises. The absolute most critical part of this type of prevention is the ?little things.? To stop the teasing and ridicule that occurs in schools is crucial. In other words, we are cutting all this aggression off at the source: the bullies (Schwartz).

In a paper addressing school shootings Thomas De Zengotita said ?the cruelty of the prep and jock culture toward those who don?t fit in is the underlying issue for these kids,? (Zengotita). This is apparent through the fact that assailants are generally rejected by their peers (?Psychologist Details Troubling Similarity in Recent School Shootings?). One may never know the frustrations this causes and the psychological damage it has. Unfortunately because of this, victims are blinded into thinking that the only way out is to kill. This type of conflict would never arise if there were no basis, no psychological damage. On one of the morning shows, a boy appeared for a ?local- folks- react piece? shortly after the Columbine massacre. He did not agree with the shootings, and he was not a Nazi wannabe, but he too was harassed by the jocks. Of Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold his thoughts were: ?at least? took a stand.? Two others after stating they did not agree with the shooting said ??it did take guts,? and ?? maybe it would make people think before opening their mouths next time? (Zengotita). These are not the words of murderous juvenile delinquents, but those of teenagers exiled by their peers and anguished with this fact on a daily basis.

In all cases of school shootings, the violent intentions of the shooter had been communicated to their peers. Often these confessions included details as specific as the time and the place of the attack. These threats, unfortunately, were laid on deaf ears. They are very rarely taken seriously and it is even more rare that these plans are reported to school officials or to other adults (?Psychologist Details Troubling Similarity in Recent School Shootings?). The shooting that took place in 1997 near Bethel, Alaska is a prime example of this lack of concern. Sixteen year old Evan Ramsey had told so many people about his plans and his ?hit list? that on the day of the shooting his friends crowded onto the balcony in the library to watch the action. This plan was so well known that one girl was able to turn to another and say ?you?re not supposed to be up here, you?re on the list? (Dedman: ?Deadly Lessons: School Shooters tell Why?). I am not one to support ?narking,? but when faced with a situation like the one in Bethel, Alaska, one must stop and think. Is it worth risking the lives of the potential victims to protect a reputation?

Students are not the only people that need to take responsibility for trying to prevent these horrific events. Assailants have offered one unanimous suggestion to America?s schools: ?Listen to us.? Adults may be able to learn what has been planned, if they take the time to ask (Dedman: ?Deadly Lessons: School Shooters tell Why?). I then ask of all the teachers, administrators, etc.: look for something, anything that could be a sign of intent for murder. Also, when witness to teasing in the hallways and cafeterias, as minor as it may seem at the time, do not over look it. These same ?minor? things are not so minor the thirtieth time around, please do not over look them at one. In other situations, some teachers and other staff members have not taken students who reported the violence seriously. An excellent example of this is what happened at a college prep, boarding school in Great Barrington, Massachusetts. At the age of eighteen, Wayne Lo had planned to attack his school. The school knew he had received a package from an ammo company, but had decided to let him keep it. As if that is not enough, a student had tried to warn counselors that the shooting would take place but they did not take the tip- off seriously. Because of their negligence, on December 14, 1992, Lo opened fire on his classmates. After the dust cleared two people were killed and twice as many wounded. (Dedman: “Bullying, Tormenting Often Led to Revenge in Cases Studied”). This all could have been prevented if the adults had opened their eyes to what is around them.

Our school systems in America have come a long way. The effort is there, but governmental and administrative officials cannot conquer this huge obstacle on their own. The responsibility lies with the rest of society to take a standard address this issue. Parents need to talk to their kids. Teachers talk to their students and coworkers. Students talk to their friends and anyone else that will listen. While school shootings are a huge problem, the bigger problem stopping them. This could all be possible if the teasing, rejection, tormenting, and ridicule all simply ceased to exist. Change the atmosphere in schools. Students take some initiative and stick up for that kid that no one really cares about or smile at someone new. One never really knows what goes on in someone else?s life (?Psychologist Details Troubling Similarity in Recent School Shootings?), a smile could be exactly what they need.

Works Cited PageDedman, Bill ?Bullying, Tormenting often led to Revenge in Cases Studied? Chicago- Sun Times 15 Oct. 2000: Online. Internet. 14 Mar. 2002 Available: http://www.suntimes.com/cgi-bin/print.cgiDedman, Bill ?Deadly Lessons: School Shooters tell Why? Chicago Sun- Times Online. Internet. 14 Mar. 2002 Available: http://www.suntimes.com/shoot?Facts About Violence Among Youth and Violence in Schools? CDC Media Relations Division 21 Apr. 1999: Online Internet 11 Mar. 2002 Available: http://www.cdc.gov/od/oc/media/fact/violence.htmFurlong Michael ?The School in School Violence: Definitions and Facts? Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders Summer 2000: Online. Internet. 9 Mar. 2002 Available: http://www.findarticles.com?Psychologist Details a Troubling Similarity in Recent School Shootings? Business Wire 27 Sept. 1999: Online. Internet. 11 Mar. 2002 Available: http://www.findarticles.comSchwartz, Wendy ?An Overview of Strategies to Reduce School Violence? ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education October 1996:115 Online. Internet. 11 Mar. 2002 Available: http://www.eric-web.tc.columbia.edu/digests.dig115.html?Working Together to Create Safe Schools? National School Safety Center 1999 Online. Internet. 17 Mar. 2002 Available: http://www.nssc1.orgYell, Mitchell L. ?Searching for Safe Schools: Legal Issues in the Prevention of School Violence? Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders Fall 2000 Online. Internet. 9 Mar. 2002 Available: http://www.findarticles.comZengotita, Thomas De ?The Gunfire Dialogues? Harper?s Magazine July 1999 Online Internet 14 Mar. 2002 Available: http://www.findarticles.com