

STAFF AND STUDENT SAFETY



SCHOOL SAFETY STARTS WITH PEOPLE

Everyone agrees that it's difficult to learn with you're afraid – and it isn't easy to teach, either. But when people talk about school safety these days, they're actually talking about two different, but interrelated, things.

Students, educators and politicians all feel the pressure to prevent the next mass shooting in a school. Some say we should arm the teachers, but our union rejects that plan. It's not cost effective and the risks of putting more guns in schools are incalculable.

There's a separate threat that comes from students in crisis who don't get the support they need. Some say the solution is to suspend or expel those students. Our union rejects that plan, too. It would push more black and brown students away from school at a time when they need educators to rally around them.

Instead, our union favors investing more in the staffing and training of ESPs, teachers and other educators who keep our worksites safe. Our plan:

1. Hire one counselor, social worker, psychologist or similar support staff for every 250 students. Minnesota's current ratio of counselors-to-students is 1:723.
2. Create enforceable caps on class sizes for every grade and ensure passing times are safely staffed with well-supported ESPs or other professionals.
3. Teach every educator about restorative practices, a successful strategy for reducing in-school violence and reducing racial disparities in school discipline.
4. Provide a full-service community school in every district that asks for one.
5. Every school that requests a trained and certified school resource officer should get one.

THREE THINGS TO KNOW

- A survey of more than 1,200 Education Minnesota members found an overwhelming majority say the most effective way to make school safer is by hiring more counselors and support staff.
- It is impossible to calculate all the risks of arming more teachers, but we absolutely do know there's a mental health crisis right now among young people in Minnesota.
- Any school safety plan must include more than new locks and door buzzers. None of that stops a shooter who gets in with a student ID, or waits in the parking lot.

TAKING CHARGE

- If you think commonsense gun control is the answer, talk to your representatives to Congress.
- Members of the Minnesota House and Senate control the state budget for security improvements in schools and the operating money to hire mental health professionals and reduce class sizes.
- The governor can make or break school safety bills, or bills to expand access to mental health care.
- Members of school boards can demand more professional development and safer staffing ratios for ESPs, whose important contributions to the learning environment are often overlooked.



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