

NEA Talking Points about Gun and School Safety

Background

In the deadliest school shooting since Sandy Hook, 19-year-old Nikolas Cruz opened fire with an AR-15 rifle at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, killing 17 people – including three educators, two of whom were NEA members – and injuring another 16. Since the school massacre, students have led a growing chorus of protests, demonstrations, and walkouts.

Strategy

Continue to allow the students affected by the tragedy to organically organize events, protests, and lead the way. Stand firmly in support of their actions and work with friends and allies to echo their efforts.

DO NOT: Make this about the NRA. Focus on keeping our students and schools safe and demanding action to prevent further violence in our schools.

DO NOT: Advocate directly for walk out or a national strike. Instead talk about the amazing passion and energy that we're seeing from students, educators and students across the country.

DO NOT: Focus solely on gun control. Banning or restricting access to gun is only part of the solution. We need a comprehensive solution that include universal background checks, banning of bump stocks and high-capacity magazine, increased access to mental wellness and health care, safety measures for school buildings (secure entrances, tighter lockdown procedures)

DO: Reject the notion that we need to arm teachers. We need few guns in schools, not more. Teachers should be teaching, not acting as armed security guards.

DO: Focus on the kids, not the adults.

General Talking Points

- Our foremost priority as educators is to ensure the safety and well-being of all of our students. We all have a professional responsibility to create safe schools and communities.
- As a country, we can and must do more to ensure that everyone who walks through our school doors — educator, student, parent or community member — is safe and free from violence.
- We of course need well-resourced schools with the capacity to provide community support services such as health care and counseling to those in need. However, these critical services cannot stop individuals who are intent on committing mass murder and have access to assault weapons.
- As educators, we stand up for the opportunities that all students deserve, and our advocacy begins with providing safe, desirable environments where teaching and learning can occur.
- However, we cannot fulfill our professional obligation to students without [demanding common-sense gun laws](#).

- Sadly, from Lakefront to Marshall County to Sandy Hook and Virginia Tech, these acts of violence in our classrooms has become all too common. Between 2013 and 2015, an average of two school shootings each month took place at K-12 schools nationwide, according to [Everytown for Gun Safety](#).
- Thoughts and prayers aren't enough to keep our students and educators safe. We demand a plan that will keep dangerous weapons out of the hands of dangerous people. We now know that it is up to communities, families, activists, educators, and the students themselves to stand up and demand that those who are trusted with protecting them do their jobs.
- In the aftermath of the shooting, [Stoneman Douglas students have been some of the most passionate and articulate advocates](#) for gun safety and common sense gun laws. We applaud their determination and support their enthusiasm and actions.
- NEA leaders join are calling for new gun laws so that educators can focus on nurturing, mentoring, and inspiring students, and not keeping them safe from gun violence. We need to pressure our representatives to pass common-sense gun laws and listen to the voices of educators and students.
- That's why we together with the National Public Education Network, American Federation of Teachers, Moms Demand Action, Everytown for Gun Safety, Giffords: Courage to Fight Gun Violence, and other national organizations, NEA is calling on communities to take action against gun violence [on April 20th](#) together in a way that sends a strong message to policy makers that #enoughisenough. [April 20th](#) marks the anniversary of the Columbine tragedy.
- While NEA will be primarily focused on the [April 20th](#) events, we will be supportive of students, educators, parents and community leaders organizing for change to end gun violence in their schools/communities. We call on principals, administrators, and school districts to support them as well.
- **March 14th** – the Women's March has announced a National School Walkout. The idea behind this day is that school communities will walk out of their schools for 17 minutes to honor the lives lost in Parkland.
 - *NEA will join with AFT in encouraging educators throughout the country to wear orange on this day.*
- **March 24th** – Several students who survived the tragedy at Lakeland have called for a student-led march and protest. They are planning to travel to DC and meet with elected officials on the need to address gun violence. This is a fully student-planned march. More information is available at <https://www.marchforourlives.com/>
- Together we will make a strong statement to stand up against gun violence against our students and schools.

About White House proposal to arm teachers with guns

Americans do not want to turn our public schools into prisons, educators into armed guards, and students into prisoners. That is not what the survivors of the tragic Parkland shooting are demanding.

Those who are proposing arming educators need to listen to Parkland students, educators, and parents. They are demanding real solutions to curb gun violence like those offered by educators, parents, and — most importantly — the students.

Bringing more guns into our schools does nothing to protect our students and educators from gun violence.

Our students need more books, art and music programs, nurses and school counselors; they do not need more guns in their classrooms.

We owe it to the students and school personnel, who've lost their lives at schools and on campuses across the country, to work together so that we can thoughtfully and carefully develop common sense solutions that really will save lives.

They are demanding common-sense gun laws. They are demanding a plan that will keep dangerous weapons out of the hands of dangerous people. They are saying not one more.

We need to listen to them.

About Gun Free School Zones

Let's be clear, our number one goal should be that our schools remain safe and absolutely gun free environments where students can learn and educators can teach.

Ending gun-free zones does nothing to protect students. In fact, there is zero evidence that gun-free zones endanger students.

This is a distraction from doing what works to prevent gun violence from occurring in the first place. Putting more guns in schools will not help to protect our students.