



GUNS IN SCHOOLS

GUN CONTROL



TO GET YOU THINKING

Hunt on for father of boy, 7, who took gun to school *Tebogo Monama, The Star, 29 September 2017*

Johannesburg - Police are looking for the father of a Brakpan Grade 2 child who shocked teachers and pupils by bringing a loaded gun to school to shoot a “bully” he claimed to have been tormenting him.

Brakpan police spokesperson Captain Pearl van Staad said the seven-year-old boy had taken his father’s loaded gun to school and showed it to the teacher. “He told the teacher that he was going to shoot a schoolmate who bullies him,” she said.

When the police arrived at the boy’s home after confiscating the gun, the father - the owner of the weapon - had fled, said Van Staad. “We now have a search warrant and need to find the father,” she said.

Van Staad said he had not placed his gun in a safe bolted to the wall, as per safety regulations. “His safe was not bolted to the wall and it was open,” she said.

Van Staad said if a gun owner was found to have contravened the Firearms Control Act, they could be charged with failure to lock their safe, failure to have the keys to the safe and failure to have their firearm in their possession when not in a locked safe. The Gauteng Education Department confirmed the incident.

Spokesperson Steve Mabona said that when the pupil was taken to the police station, he had been released after counselling. “The school governing body has already met with the parents to reinforce their understanding of the school’s code of conduct and the seriousness of their child’s conduct. The meeting resolved that the pupil be taken for further psychological intervention”. This meeting took place

before the police were called in to investigate the incident. Mabona urged parents to encourage their children to follow school rules.

DA Gauteng community safety spokesperson Michele Clark said schools had been turned into “crime scenes” and accused Education MEC Panyaza Lesufi and his Community Safety counterpart, Sizakele Nkosi-Malobane, of not doing enough to secure them. Earlier this week, a deputy principal in Duduza was shot and killed in his office when three men walked in claiming they were there to fix an electrical fault. In 2012, Grade 11 pupil Tsundzukani Mthombeni from Phineas Xulu Secondary School in Vosloorus, on the East Rand, took his police officer mother’s gun to school and shot and killed a bully in class. He had been bullied by Grade 10 pupil Nkululeko Ndlovu and two other boys.

Mthombeni was sentenced to seven years in prison, suspended for five years, on a count of culpable homicide. On the firearm charge, he was sentenced to two years’ imprisonment, also suspended for five years.

Clark said, “The Department of Community Safety’s patrollers placed at various schools are not trained to deal with the severity of bullying, fighting, drugs and various other crimes that take place daily on the school grounds”. She said school infrastructure was poor and there was no proper fencing, making it easy for criminals to gain access to the schools. “Some schools don’t have panic buttons, alarms and electric fences. Many schools in the province do not have security guards due to a lack of financial resources”.

Source: Boy Takes Gun To School



QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

How could the incident described in the article have been avoided?

What are the ways we can make schools into safer spaces?

What are the most common forms of violence at schools in your community?

DEFINITION OF VIOLENCE AT SCHOOL

Violence is often thought of as the same thing as crime, but not all crime is violence and not all violence is criminal.

This is especially true regarding violence at schools. For example, many common forms of bullying at school are violent in nature and harmful to the victims - but bullying is often not considered a crime.

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines violence as: "The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, (against oneself), another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation".

Source: School Violence In South Africa

WHAT THE LAW SAYS

The South African Schools Act, 1996

The Regulations for Safety Measures at Schools in the South African Schools Act (page B65) were amended in 2006.

Important points to note from the 2006 amendments are:

- The definition of a dangerous object: "dangerous object" means - any firearm or gas weapon.
- Section 4, under which all public schools are declared "Violence and drug free".

(1) All public schools are hereby declared drug free and dangerous object free zones.

(2) No person may:

(a) allow any dangerous object on public school premises

(b) carry any dangerous object on public school premises

(c) store any dangerous object on public school premises

except in officially designated places identified by the principal

(d) possess illegal drugs on public school premises

(e) enter public school premises while under the influence of illegal drugs or alcohol

(f) cause any form of violence or disturbance which can negatively impact on any public school activities

(g) wittingly condone, connive, hide, abet, encourage possession of dangerous objects or refuse, fail, neglect to

report the sighting or presence of any dangerous objects to the departmental authorities or the police as soon as possible

(h) directly or indirectly cause harm to anyone, who exposes another person who makes an attempt to frustrate the prevention of the dangerous objects and activities

(3) A police official or in his absence, the principal or delegate may, without warrant:

(a) search any public school premises if he or she has a reasonable suspicion that a dangerous object or illegal drugs may be present on public school premises in contravention of the regulations

(b) search any person present on the public school premises; and

(c) seize any dangerous object or illegal drugs present on public school premises or on the person in contravention of these regulations

(4) No educator, parent or learner, and no other person, may possess or use:

(a) alcohol

(b) illegal drugs

(c) any illegal substance or

(d) dangerous objects during any school activity

Source: South African Schools Act

THE NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR THE PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT OF ALCOHOL AND DRUG USE AMONGST LEARNERS IN SCHOOLS

The Department of Basic Education has developed a National Strategy for the Prevention and Management of Alcohol and Drug Use Amongst Learners in Schools. The Strategy hopes to achieve safer communities by first making schools safe: Since schools mirror the communities that they are located in, curbing drug use in schools will in turn prevent drug use within the broader community, making this space safer for all residents, including children.

Source: Safety in Schools

National School Safety Framework (NSSF)

The National School Safety Framework is a comprehensive guide for the Department of Basic Education, schools, districts and provinces to achieving a safe, healthy and violence-free learning environment.

Source: National School Safety Framework

DID YOU KNOW?

A RECENT UNICEF (UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND) REPORT IDENTIFIED THREE MAIN REASONS FOR FOCUSING ON THE ISSUE OF VIOLENCE AT SCHOOLS:

ENDING SCHOOL VIOLENCE CAN MAKE A BIG CONTRIBUTION TO THE DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL OF COUNTRIES. GETTING YOUNG PEOPLE (PARTICULARLY GIRLS) INTO SCHOOL, AND KEEPING THEM THERE SAFELY, IS ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT.



School violence VIOLATES THE BASIC RIGHTS of children. Violence at school can have a negative impact on learners' ability to be educated and can increase a young person's isolation or feelings of loneliness. In addition, it may place both their mental and physical health at risk. School violence can also result in SECONDARY VICTIMISATION. In other words, it can have a negative impact on young people who may not have directly experienced violence, but may have seen friends or their peers affected.



VIOLENCE-FREE SCHOOLS, CAN HAVE A POSITIVE IMPACT on the environments where the school is located. In other words, violence-free schools, can promote violence prevention and social cohesion in communities. Social cohesion generally refers to the well-being and unity of people living in a community.



GUN FREE SOUTH AFRICA (GFSA) RECOMMENDS THAT SCHOOLS BECOME GUN FREE ZONES (GFZ). HERE'S WHY:

GUNS ARE THE PRIMARY CAUSE OF NON-NATURAL DEATH FOR YOUNG PEOPLE 15 YEARS AND OLDER. IN ADDITION TO BEING THE MAIN VICTIMS OF GUN VIOLENCE, YOUNG PEOPLE ARE VERY OFTEN THE PERPETRATORS OF GUN VIOLENCE. GUN OWNERSHIP, MASCULINE IDENTITY AND POWER ARE LINKED, ESPECIALLY AMONG YOUNG MEN. MASCULINE IDENTITY REFERS TO HOW SOCIETY EXPECTS MEN TO BEHAVE.



There is EASY ACCESS TO WEAPONS in schools. The 2012 National School Violence Study conducted by the Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention found almost a quarter of learners knew people who had brought weapons to school. Weapon carrying and violence at school makes young people feel unsafe, which has a negative effect on education. It can promote truancy (i.e. where learners bunk school), as LEARNERS ARE AFRAID to go to school, and it makes it DIFFICULT FOR THEM TO CONCENTRATE on their studies.



A SCHOOL IS BIGGER THAN ITS GROUNDS - THERE IS A FLOW FROM SCHOOLS TO THE WIDER COMMUNITY. ONCE THE GUN FREE MESSAGE IS ESTABLISHED AT A SCHOOL, IT IS EASIER TO ROLL OUT THE CONCEPT TO NEARBY FACILITIES, SUCH AS SPAZA SHOPS AND SHEBEENS.

Most schools have infrastructure to support a gun free programme. Schools are meant to keep an incident book to record incidents of violence. This makes it easier to MONITOR AND EVALUATE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE GFZ. The Safe Schools Programme in the Western Cape includes strategies such as installing security systems and a call centre where learners can report violence or abuse.

REMEMBER

In 2012, 22.2% of secondary school learners in South Africa – which translated to just over a million learners – experienced threats of violence, assaults, robberies or sexual assaults (including rape) while at school. Female learners bore the brunt of this reported violence.

Source: School Violence

FIREARM FREE ZONE SCHOOLS

Section 140 of the Firearms Control Act (2000) gives the Minister of Police the power to declare spaces as Firearm Free Zones (FFZ). These differ from Gun free Zones in that anyone carrying, storing or using a gun in a Section 140 Firearm Free Zone has committed a **criminal** offence, and can be imprisoned for between 5 to 25 years for breaking the law.

Recognising that schools are often the site of violence, the South African Police Service (SAPS) put out a tender in 2000 for a pilot project to develop, implement and maintain schools as Firearm Free Zones.

The tender was awarded to Gun Free South Africa and the pilot was undertaken in 27 primary and secondary schools in the Western Cape (Khayelitsha and Manenburg); KwaZulu-Natal (Kwa Mashu, Inanda and Phoenix); Eastern Cape (Motherwell); North West (Rustenburg); and Gauteng (Sebokeng).

The pilot identified five steps to develop and establish a school as a Firearm Free Zone:

- **TALK:** Involves consulting school stakeholders (educators, learners, parents, the school governing body police, etc.) and electing a school safety working group to lead the project.
- **DEVELOP SCHOOL POLICY:** Through consultation, stakeholders develop the policy through problem mapping, visioning and identifying the implications of a firearm free school.
- **ADOPT SCHOOL POLICY:** Once finalised, the school formally adopts the policy and applies to the Minister of Police to be declared a Firearm Free Zone under Section 140 of the FCA.
- **IMPLEMENTATION:** This would include putting up signs, training safety teams, educators and learners.
- **ONGOING MAINTENANCE:** To ensure the school remains a Firearm Free Zone.

The CSIR Crime Prevention Centre was appointed to evaluate the pilot project. The CSIR's overall finding was that learners support Firearm Free Zones at schools. Their expectations of the project included that schools would be crime free and that teaching and learning could take place without interruptions and fear. Overall, 75% of primary school learners and 73% of secondary school learners reported that since the Firearm Free Zone project was launched at their school they felt safer.

The 27 schools in the pilot project applied to the Minister of Police to be declared as Firearm Free Zones under Section 140 of the FCA in order to secure added protection (i.e. anyone found guilty of allowing, carrying, storing or using a gun in a school declared as a Firearm Free Zone would face criminal charges). Although all 27 schools applied to the Minister of Police, to date, not a single school, or any other space, has been declared a Firearm Free Zone under the FCA. Yet many spaces have been declared as Gun Free Zones as people take a stand against guns in their space.

Source: Crime Prevention National Research Resources Centre. 2002. Exploring Firearm Free Zones (FFZ) in schools in South Africa. Pretoria: CSIR

MYTHBUSTERS ABOUT GUNS IN SCHOOLS

MYTH

Educators are allowed to carry guns at school

FACT

Under the South African Schools Act (1996) and Regulations for Safety Measures at Public Schools (2006), all public schools are dangerous object free zones; with guns listed as a dangerous object. As such, nobody - no educator, learner or parent - is allowed to carry a gun onto school premises.

Gun Free Zones and Firearm Free Zones are the same thing

Anyone can declare the space they own or manage as a Gun Free Zone. To violate the GFZ status of a premises is a civil offense. This means that anybody found violating a GFZ can be prosecuted under laws that prohibit trespassing. Only the Minister for Police can declare a space a Firearm Free Zone under Section 140 of the Firearms Control Act. It is a criminal offence to contravene the FFZ status of a premise. Anyone found contravening an FFZ will go to court. Schedule 4 - Penalties of the FCA lists the maximum period of imprisonment:

- For allowing a firearm or ammunition into an FFZ: Five years
- For carrying a firearm or ammunition in an FFZ: Ten years
- For storing a firearm or ammunition in an FFZ: Twenty-five years

DIFFERENT WAYS TO TALK ABOUT GUNS IN SCHOOLS

These questions can help guide your radio shows and outreach.

They are angles to the bigger topic of guns in schools.

You have many examples of how to develop your outreaches and radio shows from previous guides. Use them to expand on some of the angles below.



What are the ways we can make schools safer spaces?



What are the different ways we can reduce gun violence in schools and our communities as a whole?



What are the ways we can promote safety and security without guns?



How does easy access to guns, alcohol and drugs in a community affect gun violence in the local schools? - OR - What is the relationship between gun violence in a community and gun violence in the schools of that same community?



What are some of the long-term effects of a student feeling unsafe at school on their attitude toward education?