

On Tuesday, February 20th, the PDS students and I attended the faculty meeting at Thompson Valley High School that talked about safety protocols in light of the recent school shooting in Parkland, FL. The main goal of the meeting was to reinforce safety protocols related to lockout, lockdown, evacuate, and shelter, discuss how all suspicious behavior could be reported to Safe2Tell, and how the school building could be updated for tighter security. Teachers seemed very worried and skeptical that the fobs on the classroom doors (particularly the ones that connect to other classrooms) were not secure enough to block out potential shooters. They were also concerned about ratcheting up security so much that it would make students feel like they were going to school in a prison, even though the increased safety protocols were understandable for the shooting. The shared consensus was that students can always find a way to get into the building even if security measures were tight, so it's more important to address the mental health of students by doing a threat assessment on them. Lanny Hass, the principal at TVHS, also believed that it is hard to predict how to problem-solve such specific scenarios related to a school shooting when they haven't happened. As long as teachers and students followed the standard safety protocols (lockout, lockdown, evacuate, and shelter), that is the best everyone can do to be safe.

The structure of the meeting was very communal. The leaders/speakers were Hass, the SRO, and the safety team for the district. One of the speakers stated that he preferred to discuss the information in a communal, collaborative manner rather than prescribing appropriate behavior like an authoritative commander. This was intended to respect the other faculty members' emotions on the situation, but there were still a lot of panicked questions going around. Only a handful of the teachers made recommendations on what actions they

could take to monitor where students were going in the school (such as using colored shoestrings for different departments). I wouldn't say that I had many issues with the way the meeting was conducted. It's understandable in this situation for everyone to be on-edge and ask a lot of questions, and Hass handled it very pragmatically by talking about what he knew and calmly stating that he and the safety team can't solve all the problems at the moment (especially when it comes to budget). I participated a few times in the conversation. I asked a question about whether substitute teachers in the Thompson School District were aware of what the new safety protocols were in light of the shooting, and I talked about how easy it was for me and the other PDS students to get into the school by joining the crowds of students walking in. Hass addressed my first concern by stating that substitute teachers would be fine as long as they followed the safety protocols that the school they work at gives them in their subbing folder. Regarding my second point, there was debate about whether it's appropriate to have transparent backpacks and metal detectors in a school to prevent shooters from walking in. This seemed a little extreme for a school in Loveland. I agree with Hass and the safety team that the real issue is doing a threat assessment in advance rather than ramping up external security so much that students feel like they are attending a prison.

Reflecting on how this experience pertained to me as a student in the education program, I appreciate the constant reinforcement of safety information—especially as a substitute teacher. Since safety protocols don't really change much, it gives me the feeling that I am always in control of my environment and keeping students safe. I'm sure safety protocols vary slightly between different school cultures (like one in an inner city vs. a suburb). The best I can do is talk to my coworkers as a source of collaboration and take action as best as we can.

This is not a problem that one person can solve. That said, I know that I can help the situation by always working on being calm and trusting the system in place.