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It hasn't been very long since the last media coverage of a school shooting, with one student turning against and reacting violently upon fellow peers or teachers. Other acts of violence at school are also becoming more common. A few years ago at my school, a student planted a pipe bomb, but his plan was discovered, thus narrowly averting disaster. Last year, someone was expelled after threatening to bring a gun to school; another student was suspended for several days after threatening to kill a classmate. Just a few weeks ago, a boy sitting at my lunch table was kicked out for having his pocket knife with him. School is the place where children, who are the future, are trained and educated. If violence is escalating in that atmosphere, something is wrong. Peace and nonviolence in the future will only come through the education of this generation's children, and school is the most important place to begin.

One step involves the curriculum and options presented to students.

Textbooks seem to glorify war and violence through their focus on them, and often nearly skip over important nonviolent people and events. I had the opportunity this year to take online classes through Virtual High School, and one that was offered was Peacemaking. In this class, I learned many valuable things, including peace history, the value of communication, and the respect for many different viewpoints, that were not taught in any classroom. Such a class needs to become a more widespread option to complement war education. Or perhaps teachers could spend more time on important historical nonviolent movements, their success, and the results. Also, the presence of military recruiters in schools seems to reinforce that violence is acceptable and necessary. Such incentives they offer to uncertain students can convince them to take a path that they may not have chosen without the direct pressure right in school, had they not been allowed to promote military involvement on school grounds.

Students and parents who show interest in this should inform others through presentations, articles, editorials, and other means, thus sparking questions and interest from a wider body of support. Existing organizations, such as The Coalition Against Militarism in Our Schools, could help. This would encourage their teachers and school administrators to discuss the idea with the school board and obtain clearance to offer this education or discourage recruitment. After experimentation and evaluation, if the result is positive, these measures should be presented to the state's department of education to allow more extensive publicity and execution if approved. However, teachers would have to be trained in that area, the curriculum revised, and new materials purchased, and the military would not take kindly to losing a large field of potential recruits. Because of the dedication, work, organization, and scale involved, this option is probably least viable, although it is not impossible.

Domestic issues and a poor home environment can lead students to channel their feelings through violence, bullying, or unhealthy detachment

because they don't recognize other more positive responses. A nearby town has a program called Mother to Mother Ministry, which pairs mothers, generally from different socioeconomic backgrounds, to support, aid, and teach each other through friendship. Whole families benefit from this, and it can change a child's home life and views so that love becomes stronger than violence. Such a program, implemented in all communities, could decrease household problems and in turn diminish the emotions leading to violence.

The first step would be getting the word out about the program. A willing coordinator would organize a base of partners and encourage involvement.

Through activities and mutual learning opportunities, such as scrapbooking, gardening, cooking, and other workshops, friendship would evolve and mothers could find higher self-esteem and find new ways to relate to their children and spouses without fomenting violence. This project would require organization and a strong commitment by all individuals involved. Without local support and donors, funding could become another obstacle. A need exists in every community for this type of ministry, and because of its flexibility and informal nature, it could be structured according to the needs of each location and with as many or few participants as interested; this would make it a fairly simple and feasible enterprise.

Many students are not involved in extracurricular activities, and therefore have few constructive alternatives to violent video games, unhealthy activities, or poor environments, which breed violent behavior. Maybe dues are too expensive, the focus of the organization isn't interesting, or they are not friends with the people involved. These students need to belong to something. Schools should offer a club to everyone, regardless of skills, interests, or backgrounds, to provide a support network of friends and a source of entertainment to such students. This peace club could take as much involvement as one is willing to give, and perhaps organize fun activities and local service projects to foster goodwill and a hunger for justice in participants.

Interested students would have to form a leadership team, find an adult sponsor, and publicize to the student body. The leaders would need to be aware of community service opportunities, organize inspiring guest presentations, and be open to suggestions from all the members involved. They would promote communication among members so everyone would feel included. Students could see firsthand the benefits of compassion and altruism. Potential challenges include lack of time, enthusiasm, and suitable service projects for the weather or number of participants needed. Because this would be a simple, low-budget, student-run organization, it is the most realistic practice to help curb school violence.

School violence, often with a root in domestic trouble, is a prevalent and rising problem today. Three possible preventative measures include emphasizing peace education and ousting military recruitment in schools; providing support for mothers to boost the quality of home life; and offering students a peace club at school to spend their time in a positive and charitable manner. With organization and dedication, every community can do their part to bring this to fruition.