



July 2013

Fact Sheet

California School Shootings: The Brutal Facts

Mass school shootings weigh heavily on every public school administrator’s mind in the aftermath of the tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, in December 2012. As California school district officials work toward making their schools safer for students, it is important to note some key facts in relation to school shootings in the state. This fact sheet offers a quick reference for the type and number of school shooting incidents that have happened in California over the past 20 years.

Since 1992, there have been 59 K-12 school shootings in California; 56 people died. Of those shootings:

- 15 were confirmed as gang-related.
- 15 occurred while students were commuting to or from school.
- 12 occurred before or after school on school grounds.
- 8 were suicides; 2 of those occurred after the gunman killed a loved one.
- 6 were committed by adults who were not employed or enrolled in the school.
- 3 involved individual fights during school hours.
- 2 happened during lunch break.
- 2 resulted from accidental discharge of a firearms in a student backpack.
- 2 involved an adult opening fire on a playground full of children.
- 1 was classified as a hate crime during school hours.
- 1 police officer shot a youth in self-defense who was beating him with a baseball bat.
- 1 principal was shot after a confrontation with a student in his office.
- 1 was a premeditated mass shooting, with two dead and 11 wounded.

California, because of its large population and other factors, led the nation in school shootings over that 20-year period, with other states averaging roughly 20 shootings and 20 deaths. Altogether, there were 386 school shootings across the nation during the period. Seventy-two percent of the victims, and 71 percent of the shooters, were between the ages of 10-19—children shooting children.

A national tragedy—in perspective

School shootings are undeniably a national tragedy that affects all of society. However, it’s vitally important to remember that they account for only a fraction of the far larger tragedy of children’s violent deaths in general—and that school is, in fact, a very safe place for children to be. Of 58,408 homicides among youths aged 5-18 between the 1992-93 and 2009-10 school years, just 1.3 percent occurred at school. (School-site suicides were even rarer, representing fewer than one in 100 such deaths in the age group.)

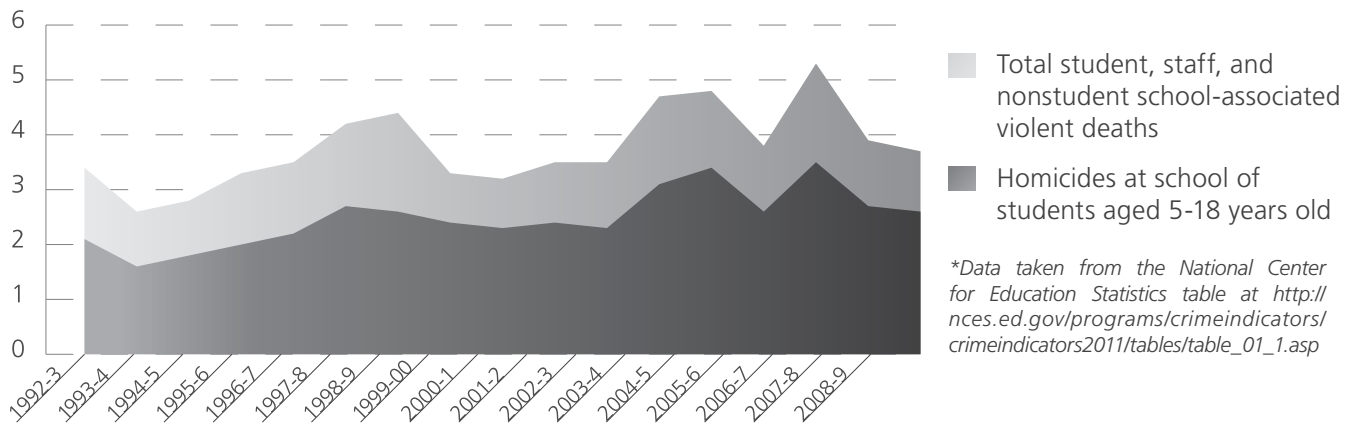
Recent K-12 school shootings in California, while alarming, did not result in a single student death. They include:

Jan. 10, 2012—Taft Union High School, Taft: 0 deaths

Feb. 2, 2011—Louisiana Schnell Elementary School, Placerville: 1 death (the principal, killed by a custodian)

Jan. 18, 2011—Gardena High School, Harbor Gateway: 0 deaths

Homicides at school of students aged 5-18 years old



The worst mass school shooting in the state over the past 20 years occurred in Santee on March 5, 2001, resulting in two student fatalities. A student at Santana High School killed two fellow students in the restroom before heading out to the quad, where he wounded 11 other students and two administrators. He stopped to reload as many as four times, firing 30 or more shots.

School safety resources

There is no better time than now for California school administrators to redouble their work toward providing safer schools for our students. Following are some helpful resources:

The California School Boards Association's School Safety Web page

www.csba.org/SchoolSafety

Resources to assist governance teams as they establish the organizational structures necessary to enhance school safety include: Action steps; sample board policies and administrative regulations; tips on developing comprehensive school safety plans and on communicating during school emergencies; California Schools magazine articles; and related policy briefs.

StopTheShootings.org

<http://stoptheshootings.org>

Launched in 2009 in memory of the Columbine massacre in Colorado, this private initiative is focused on reporting all school shooting incidents. Its website includes an interactive map pinpointing locations, color-coded to distinguish fatal incidents; the "List all Shootings" button leads to details of each incident.

National School Safety Center

www.schoolsafety.us

Established in 1984 by presidential mandate as a joint program of the U.S. Department of Education and Department of Justice, the Center is now an independent non-profit organization based in Westlake Village, California, providing safety assessments and training and organizing America's Safe Schools Week the third week of October each year (Oct. 20-26 in 2013).

National Center for Education Statistics

<http://nces.ed.gov>

The primary federal entity for collecting and analyzing data related to education in the U.S. and other nations, NCES is located within the U.S. Department of Education and the Institute of Education Sciences. Its website offers a wealth of detailed statistics. Especially recommended:

- » Percentage of schools with various security measures
- » School Survey on Crime and Safety
- » Crime and Safety Surveys

*Source: National Center for Education Statistics