

Silence from the Spartans by Lily Williams



After the terrifying mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, schools across the country began to act by scheduling drills, discussing gun violence in schools, and releasing statements to district families. The relevance of acting directly after this event came from the coverage surrounding the survivors of the shooting and their determination to keep the discussion on gun violence alive. Administrators need to bring a sense of reality to students nationwide, as Marjory Stoneman Douglas High and the preceding school shooting locations could have been any school across the country.

Following the Parkland shooting, Bettendorf High School took the following actions: meeting with teachers to review safety and student grieving protocol, an announcement over the school intercom to address students, a statement to parents of the district, advisor class to review ALICE protocol and the harmful effects of gun violence in schools, and a moment of silence for

all victims.

Almost two weeks after the tragedy, Pleasant Valley schools had refrained from taking similar actions, "I think it (commenting on the shooting) says that one life or two lives are of less value than 17. One's strongest comment is what your belief system is, and our belief system stands- it is the same as yesterday, as today, as it is tomorrow," said PV Superintendent Jim Spelhaug.

Instead of taking away the significance of previous lives lost from similar tragedies, he believes it is vital to maintain our beliefs with safety being the number one concern of the district. However, a comment from the district is important due to the wave of determination for change this tragedy has incited by citizens of the United States. We, as citizens, are working to prevent these horrors, not just in remembrance of the lives lost in Parkland, but fueled by all acts of school gun violence and in remembrance of lives lost over previous decades.

Pleasant Valley's silence has left unnerving feelings with some parents and students in the district: "I felt the administration should have addressed students, parents and teachers, firstly acknowledging the loss of lives, and then outlining our school's safety protocols, how we work with city police, and how we would handle such an event if ever such a terrible tragedy

tragedy," commented Charlene Ruccolo, parent of a senior at PVHS.

Parents are frustrated with the administration because they want to assure this issue is being addressed and taken seriously. Students look towards the administration to guide us through confusing times and are influenced by adult responses to a situation. The lack of comment from PV affects two groups of students differently. Those who are already concerned about the possibility of a tragedy happening at PV, feel a lack of compassion from the district and are concerned that this threat is not being taken seriously. The students who think "it will never happen at PV" and make a joke of ALICE drills, are only confirmed in their belief that it is not an issue to be concerned with. In response to students' concerns regarding a lack of comment, Dr. Spelhaug said, "If I misjudged this as a moment where students needed comfort and we did not provide that, then that is my fault and I apologize."

Although there was an oversight in communicating to students and district families in the wake of the Parkland tragedy, the administration said they will be keeping an open mind to opinions on how to better our school environment. It is not only up to the district to incite change but also the students of Pleasant Valley to bring about the change they want to see in the world. Dr. Spelhaug calls upon students to not just make a statement by walking out or marching on a particular day, but to be involved on a regular basis by registering to vote, attending school board meetings, speaking up at local town halls and calling or writing state representatives. As we cannot consistently rely on adults to guide us, students should take matters into their own hands by educating themselves.

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should happen at one of our schools. Even though we are very blessed with our schools and community, we should never take for granted that we are not immune to such