

Fatal school shooting elicits all-too-familiar responses

CANADA AM

Broadcast Date: Thursday, May 24, 2007

Time: 08:13:40 ET

End Time: 08:17:00 ET

Network: CTV

THOMSON: Gun violence in a Toronto high school claimed the life of a young student yesterday. Jordan Manners, who turned 15 last Friday, was gunned down in the hallway at C. W. Jefferys Collegiate Institute. His murder has prompted questions about the safety of our schools.

Joining us now with more is **Stu Auty** of the Canadian Safe Schools Network.

Mr. Auty, to begin with, there are obviously questions in any event like this. But immediately people started saying we need metal detectors in these schools. What do you think?

AUTY: Well, that is invariably the call as soon as there is an incident like this. There's a call for an immediate fix. And metal detectors, armed guards, that kind of thing, is something that people can see that, it's an optical thing, it's a visual thing. The reality is there is no one quick fix that can prevent this kind of thing from happening down the road.

We don't know the details of exactly what the motivation was in this case. But making a school community safe is a very complex idea. And it has to do with early intervention programs at the early stages so kids understand the differences between right and wrong, and that won't go this way, won't pick up the -- the unavailability of weapons that are out there today, we know that's there.

So, there is no quick fix.

THOMSON: But what you're saying is that it needs to be -- I mean, you are not just talking about school programs or safety measures in schools, you are talking about families getting involved and parents getting involved at an early age.

AUTY: I am. I'm talking about a comprehensive approach to this issue. Kids learn their values by about age seven. And, you know, learning their values is often learned at home. And so, at the very least it's not happening there it can't happen at school.

So, these are programs that can be made available for schools. That's one component.

Securing the building itself, the physical environment, is another component. In many cases, schools are old stock, they've been built many years ago with many entrances and exits. And so, making those places physically secure is another challenge.

I am sure what's going to happen as a result of this incident, as it does predictably, is that there will be a push for a more secure place, there will be a push for all of these kinds of investigations to take place. And that I'm sure will occur.

THOMSON: Well, and certainly a sad reminder of what went on there yesterday. You can see all the yellow tape up behind you as the students are arriving to school. And a number of police officers in the area.

What should parents tell their children about this? What about the parents who have students in the school?

AUTY: Well, you know, there's clearly a need for parents to openly discuss the situation, to understand their children's pathways, who their friends are, to see if there are any warning signs that their kids may be getting involved in situations that they shouldn't be.

You know, being a parent is an inexact science. And to be able to unobtrusively -- not in an offensive way -- get into the world of their child is a challenge. And that's a parental talent.

But it's very important to see any warning signs that could be there with their kids. It's also very important to openly discuss this kind of incident so that the rumours -- and you and I know there are going to be lots of rumours that are going down here. And so, it's important to understand the reality and exactly what happens, in a calm and rational way.

THOMSON: And in the meantime, grief counsellors are in the school to deal with the students today.

Stu Auty, thank you for your time.

AUTY: My pleasure.