

The Voice of the National Memorial to Fallen Educators:

A Unique Perspective on School Safety



THE NATIONAL TEACHERS
Hall of Fame



What you need to know about the past is that no matter what has happened, it has all worked together to bring you to this very moment. And this is the moment you can choose to make everything new. Right now.” Ajay Sadh

Introduction



The inspiration for the Memorial to Fallen Educators was the Sandy Hook Elementary School tragedy that occurred on December, 14, 2012, when 20 children and 6 educators were victims of a mass shooting in their own school. As America mourned, The National Teachers Hall of Fame staff and Board of Trustees

believed that the stories of these six women educators needed to be remembered for their bravery in the face of danger: Anne Marie Murphy, Victoria Soto, Lauren Rousseau, Mary Sherlach, Rachel D'Avino, and Dawn Hochsprung. As research discovered additional names of educators who had fallen in the line of duty over the centuries, the Trustees deemed it a meaningful effort to record these stories and to provide a means by which their voices could be heard.

Thus, the Memorial was designed, fundraising began, construction was completed, and the memorial site was dedicated in June of 2014, with the 113 names that had been researched. The research is on-going, and names are added each year in June at the re-dedication ceremonies.

Each year, the hope is expressed that no more names will ever have to be added, but sadly, we know that the next year will see the list grow, either through additional research, families and school districts contacting the Hall of Fame with questions about an educator's death, and future incidents that will take educators' lives in their workplace. The role of this memorial is to document and memorialize those educators who gave their all for the profession they loved. The purpose of this report is three-fold: to share the stories of these fallen educators so that their legacies are forever remembered; to analyze the causes of their deaths, especially in recent times; and to pose questions and encourage discussion about how to make our schools safer.

Our Purpose

The National Teachers Hall of Fame (NTHF) is honored to host the National Memorial to Fallen Educators. Public or private PK-12 grade educators [defined as school district employees] who have lost their lives in the line of duty [with the exception of natural causes and domestic violence] qualify to be included on the Memorial. This National Memorial stands in the heart of the nation, where after being designated by Congress and signed into law by the President of the United States in April of 2018, it is the guardian of memories of educators who lost their lives while working with school children. This is the only national memorial in the state of Kansas, and we are grateful to the Kansas Congressional delegation for their leadership in passing legislation to recognize the importance of this endeavor in Emporia, known as “Teacher Town, USA.”

The three beautiful black granite books stand on a hill on the campus of Emporia State University at the outskirts of the rolling Flint Hills on the Kansas Plains. As of the June, 2019, rededication ceremony of the Memorial, 163 educators' names are etched in gold lettering. The memorial is a lasting tribute for family and friends to know that their loved one will be forever remembered in Emporia, Kansas.



The national debate about the safety of schools is an important one. As trustees of the NTHF, we believe that the stories of the individuals whose names are etched on the National Memorial's granite books provide a unique way of looking at school safety and should be included in the ongoing conversation about schools and safety policies.



The information that the Hall of Fame has gathered from press releases and obituaries produces a history of well over 200 years of educators who have lost their lives in the line of duty. An analysis of the causes of their deaths reveals some surprising findings. These individuals gave their lives to promote a safe and vital education system for all children and, in death, they continue to promote school safety. While we do not intend to enter a political debate about the causes of these deaths, political decisions are a major factor contributing to school safety. By examining the causes of death for the educators memorialized on the National Memorial to Fallen Educators, what lessons can we learn that would prevent those causes of death and keep our schools safer in the future?

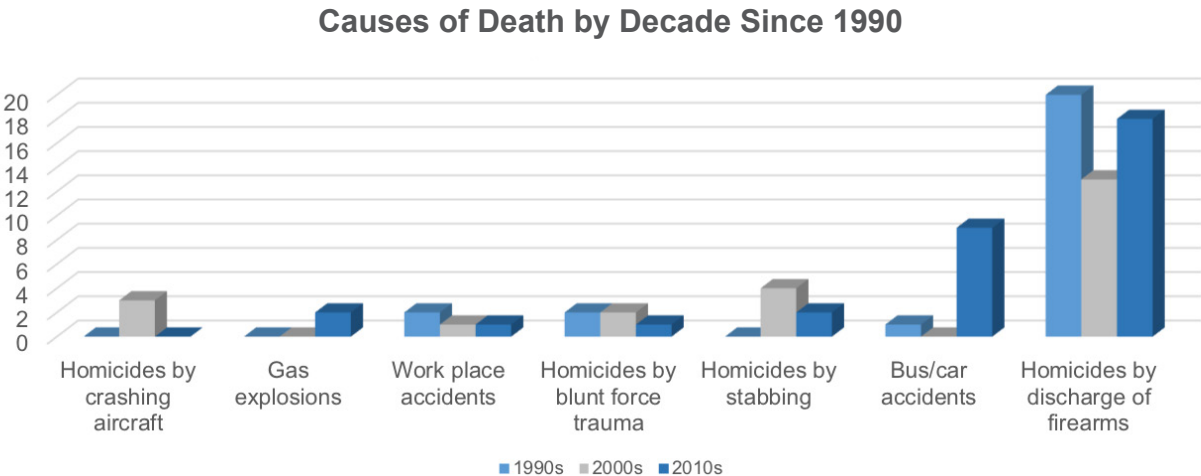
Our Findings

Of the 50 states and the District of Columbia, 13 states do not have a fallen educator listed: Arizona, Delaware, Hawaii, Idaho, Louisiana, Maine, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, West Virginia, and Wyoming. The six states with the most fallen educators represented on the Memorial are Texas (22), California (13), Florida (12), New Jersey (9), Connecticut (8), and Minnesota (7).

Given that the early reporting of educators who were killed in the line of duty may not have appeared in any historical record (e.g., newspaper article), we include in this analysis only the educators killed in

the line of duty since 1990 to have confidence that the Memorial includes all of the educators who qualify to be memorialized.

Seven categories for the fallen educators' causes of death were created using the International Classification of Diseases, Tenth Revision (ICD-10, available at ftp://ftp.cdc.gov/pub/Health_Statistics/NCHS/Publications/ICD10CM/2019/icd10cm_codes_2019.txt) and the causes of death developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention based on the ICD-10 (see, for example, Heron, 2018). The data were entered into an excel file to generate the graph below:



Our Findings (cont)

To elaborate on each cause, the three homicides from crashing aircraft were educators killed in the line of duty while on a school field trip in 2001. Two educators perished in a gas explosion at Minnehaha Academy in Minneapolis in 2017. Three educators died from electrocutions and one fell off a ladder. Six educators were beaten or kicked to death, and six were stabbed. Twelve educators perished in motor vehicle accidents in the current decade.

Below is the table of the 51 educators were killed by firearms as categorized by the perpetrators:

Educators Killed by Firearms by Perpetrator

Perpetrator	1990s	2000s	2010s	Total Victims
Student	10	9	6	25
Former Student	4		3	7
Parent	1			1
Visitor	3	2	7	12
Teacher	2		1	3
Non-Teaching Staff			1	1
No Suspect		2		2
Totals	20	13	18	51

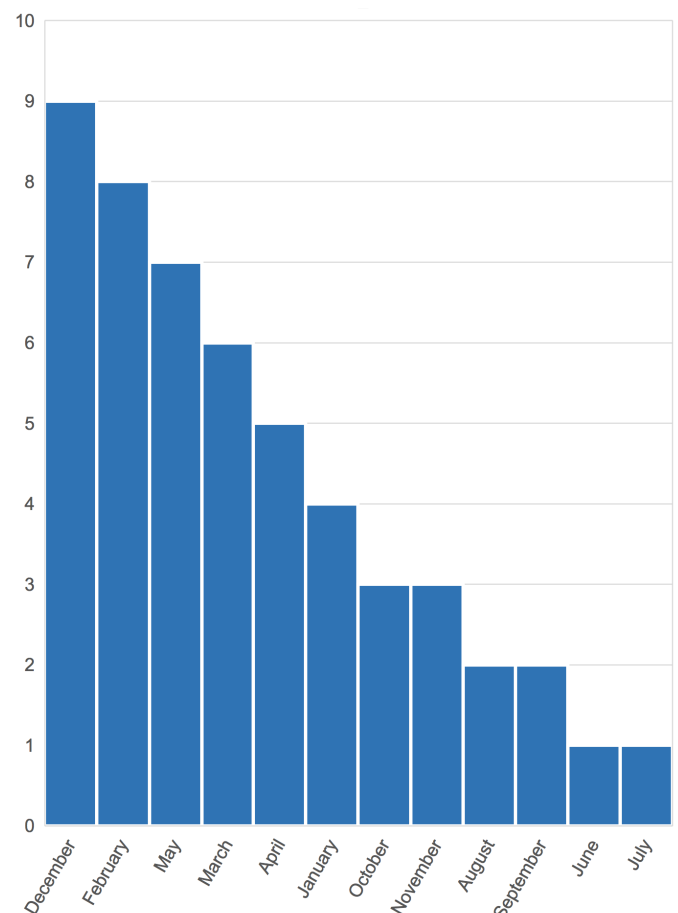
While current students were the leading perpetrators in the 1990s and 2000s, visitors, former students, or strangers are the leading perpetrators so far in the 2010s through 2018.

An analysis of educators killed by firearms by month appears to the right.

Three-fourths of the incidents with educators killed by firearms occurred in the six month period between December and May. One-fourth of the incidents occur in the six month period between June and November.



Educators Killed by Firearms by Month



The Voices Speak

If the fallen educators could speak to us, they would share stories of love, compassion, and joy with their choice of professions. They might also add that they never dreamed that one day in an educational environment, their lives would be taken away quickly and many times painfully and frighteningly. Their families would say that their loved ones are missed every day. Here are but a few of their stories:

The first known educator killed in the line of duty was Enoch Brown, the Headmaster, who along with nine of his students, was killed in July, 1764, in Greencastle, Pennsylvania, when four members of the Delaware Lenape American Indian warriors entered the schoolhouse as part of Pontiac's Rebellion. Brown pleaded with the warriors to spare the children before he was shot and scalped.

Two names on the Memorial are immediately recognizable to most Americans: Christa McAuliffe and William David (Dave) Sanders. McAuliffe was attempting to bring science into classrooms across the country as a teacher aboard the Challenger. When the shuttle exploded on launch in 1986, children in classrooms were shocked by her loss. Sanders was a hero in the 1999 Columbine tragedy in Colorado as he led students to safety from the library where gunfire erupted. As he made his way back to rescue more students, he was gunned down in the hallway.

Other names may not be as readily identifiable by the general public, but they, nonetheless, left a tremendous void in the lives of their students, colleagues, family and friends. Causes of death include accidents as well as intentional violence perpetrated against the educators. Many times, simply being in the wrong place at the wrong time resulted in tragedy. Others were bravely trying to protect students when their life was cut short. Still others were victims of careless, inattentive actions by others. Such was the case of school crossing guards Edna Umeh of Georgia in 2017 and Michelle Barrows of Massachusetts in 2018, who were both killed by motorists ignoring the speed and crossing zones near their schools. Stricter laws and clearly posted warnings are in place as a result of their deaths.

Russell Jean Hampton was a single mom of four who drove a bus for the Port Arthur, Texas, School District. As she headed back to the bus park in November of 1988, she saw one of the 10-year-old students who should have been on her bus that morning. Doing the right thing, she stopped, told him that he should get on the bus with his bike and go to school rather than being truant. When he boarded the bus, he drew a gun and shot her in the back of the head. She died several days later from her injuries. Her children, now grown, celebrated her life at the Memorial ceremony and know that her name is etched on a national memorial.

The three names that are listed as aircraft crash victims on a previous graph are Sarah Clark, James Debeuneure, and Hilda Taylor, Washington DC teachers who were accompanying their urban elementary students to a National Geographic Society field trip to California in 2001. Sadly, they were booked on the hijacked American Airlines Flight 77 that crashed into the Pentagon on the fateful day of September 11.

Several of the tragedies listed on the Memorial have led to changes that have undoubtedly saved lives as a result. For example, in Chicago in December, 1958, a fire broke out at Our Lady of the Angels School, where three nuns and 92 children perished. Sister Mary St. Canice Lyng, Sister Mary Seraphica Kelley, and Sister Mary Clare Therese were trapped in a second-story wing of the building engulfed by flames. Their deaths led to sweeping changes in school fire safety regulations nationwide. Without a warning system and escape routes, the tragedy was inevitable, but today's schools provide both as well as training everyone what to do in the case of a fire.

In New London, Texas, in March 1937, a school building exploded because of a natural gas leak that was not detected. When a sanding machine was started, the explosion rocked the building and there was no warning for the 500 students and 40 teachers in the vicinity. The tragedy took 292 student lives and nine educators' lives that day. Today, the noxious odor added to natural gas is a warning of a leak; sadly, there was no such additive in 1937.

Stories of heroism abound on the Memorial, where educators literally put themselves in danger to protect their students. Susan Jordan, a principal from Indianapolis saved children in 2016 by pushing them out of the path of a runaway bus in the school pick up lane, but she was crushed in the process. Parkland, Florida educators Aaron Feis, Scott Beigel, and Chris Hixon threw themselves in front of students when a gunman opened fire at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in 2018. Students shared stories that they were saved by the educators, who tragically lost their lives that day. In May of 2018, similar stories of gratitude were shared by students of Ann Perkins and Cynthia Tisdale, who were credited with saving students' lives at Santa Fe High School before losing their own lives to a gunman.

These are but a few of the stories from the Memorial to Fallen Educators. A list of the fallen educators, along with the years they died, their states, and, via hyperlink to press releases and obituaries, the causes of their deaths, can be found at the website <https://nthfmemorial.org/fallen-educators/>.

Our Conclusions

Ensuring a safe school is a complex task. Safe schools require well-maintained building infrastructure, prompt repairs, and safe handling and storing of all hazardous materials (e.g., chemicals, cleaning products). If a district has not already done so, it should institute a) a screening assessment to ensure fitness to be a driver and b) annual driver training by vehicle type for all educators who transport children for the district. Districts should have safety measures implemented to prevent and respond to violence. Districts should coordinate efforts with law enforcement to track incidents, employ appropriate interventions, and provide self-defense training for educators at all levels of education. Extra vigilance for prevention of shootings is warranted from December through May.

The National Teachers Hall of Fame wholly supports and promotes efforts to create, maintain, and sustain a safe school environment that also prevents violence. To do so, schools must implement purposeful, coordinated, and pervasive strategies that increase safety and security while simultaneously promoting well-being. NTHF supports evidence-based practices

to establish a school climate that will improve students' learning and affective outcomes.

Across the nation, how to keep children, educators, and education support professionals safe is being actively researched and thoroughly discussed with a variety of strategies already developed and implemented. The NTHF points citizens to their school district leadership to find out what is being done locally and to the resources found on the following page, while acknowledging that new approaches, strategies, interventions, and research findings to prevent or decrease school violence are regularly emerging.

It is hoped that the stories from the memorialized fallen educators will prompt discussion, dialogue, and a concentrated effort to make our schools the safe havens we expect them to be. The voices from the memorial ask us what can be done to prevent such incidents again? What can school districts and the general public do to encourage due diligence, safety measures, and accountability in all aspects of school safety? How can we use the resources available to equip ourselves for the challenges that face educators on a daily basis?

More Information

To learn more about the National Memorial to Fallen Educators, please contact:

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Resources

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2017). *School Violence: Prevention*. Available at <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/youthviolence/schoolviolence/prevention.html>

Council of Chief State School Officers (2018). *State's School Safety Resource Hubs and Websites*. Available at <https://ccsso.org/sites/default/files/2018-06/State%27s%20School%20Safety%20Resource%20Hubs%20and%20Websites.pdf>

Department of Homeland Security (2018). *School Safety and Security*. Available at <https://www.dhs.gov/school-safety-and-security>

Federal Commission on School Safety (2018). *Final Report of the Federal Commission on School Safety*. Available at <https://www2.ed.gov/documents/school-safety/school-safety-report.pdf>

National Association of School Psychologists (2015). *School Violence: Tips for Parents & Educators*. <https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources/school-safety-and-crisis/school-violence-prevention/school-violence-prevention-tips-for-parents-and-educators>

National Association of School Psychologists (2015). *Threat Assessment at School*. Available at <https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources/school-safety-and-crisis/threat-assessment-at-school>

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Safe and Sound Schools (2018). *Programs & Resources*. Available at <https://www.safeandsoundschools.org/resources/>

United States Secret Service National Threat Assessment Center (2018). *Enhancing School Safety Using a Threat Assessment Model: An Operational Guide for Preventing Targeted School Violence*. Available online at https://www.secretservice.gov/data/protection/ntac/USSS_NTAC_Enhancing_School_Safety_Guide_7.11.18.pdf

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