

Oxford's 2nd Anniversary: Are we any better off now?

As parents, as educators, and as a community, every one of us innately wants to keep our children safe and will do whatever we can for our perception of what that means. With the approach of the second anniversary of the horrific tragedy at Oxford High School, we have an opportunity, indeed an obligation, to examine all contributing factors and to ask ourselves: how are we stopping this from happening again?

Emotions are still raw and the healing process has yet to begin. The community has moved past burn out and landed in survival mode. Relationships between families, school administrators and board members remain tenuous at best and trust has all but broken down.

Mental health issues are at an all-time high and special education is in crisis. When there are not systems and processes in place to meet the needs of all students, everyone is affected. Lack of resources in the form of inadequate staffing, underpaid educators, and lack of mental health care providers results in added stress on the general education population. Families are struggling with soaring costs of living and lack of reliable transportation. Teachers already stretched thin cannot be attentive in the way they need to be. Small cracks soon become gaping holes in overcrowded classrooms. Is it possible we are in a worse position than when the Oxford shooting happened?

The answer lies in relationships. Collaborative partnerships between all stakeholders builds trust which leads to transparency and accountability. We need leaders who will address complicated, messy issues and we need to hold space as a community to come to collaborative solutions.

Preventative action is more effective than reactivity. We cannot ignore students who have complicated needs AND we cannot let these children act out and hurt their peers - or worse. When we don't address the effects of violence, the trauma continues and takes a toll on the entire community.

We need to invest in our children and in their mental health. We need more counselors and social workers. We need trauma-informed mental health professionals to help the community heal - and to prevent violence in other places. We need to assure that all of our kids will be safe on the way to school AND in school. We need safe gun storage laws. If we want to heal as a community, we need to start somewhere. We need to take care of each other and begin the healing.

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On the Second Anniversary,

Oxford Remembers

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#TimeForHealing
#NeverAgain