

Local View: Deterrence measures needed for schools

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Children and educators once again have paid a steep price for community inaction -- this time in Newtown, Conn.

Time and time again, we call our children “our most valuable resource.”

However, I argue that our actions seem to indicate they are far from it. Our money is secured safely in banks and insured by the FDIC, our military is squared away safely behind concertina wire, and our gold is locked away at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York -- arguably behind the most sophisticated security system in the world.

In contrast, funding for education is laughable, kids are starving as one in four currently are living in poverty, and one in four girls and one in six boys suffer from sexual abuse before reaching the age of 18.

Actions speak louder than words, and nowhere is the word “hypocrisy” better defined than in our own actions -- or inactions.

While gun control should be part of our nation-wide conversation, I would be naïve to think our answers to this most recent tragedy lie exclusively in this arena.

I give credence to gun ownership and the place it has in our society (I own firearms solely for the purpose of hunting game, and each gun is designed for that purpose only), but I also believe those gun owners who fervently wrap themselves around the 2nd Amendment could stand to temper their argument with some common sense; surely our Forefathers did not intend to protect semi-automatic assault rifles that clearly are manufactured for a purpose other than hunting.

To protect our kids, teachers and administrators, our national and local conversations need to turn to methods of deterrence. Deterrence buys precious time, which can be used to act, which in turn causes more deterrence. You can see deterrence measures incorporated into those things that our society deems important enough to protect.

To hammer this point home, consider this question: would we house our nation’s gold in the same way we house our kids in their school buildings? Let me be very, very clear -- nowhere in any answer to school security do guns reside. The ONLY exception to this rule is when we consider those law enforcement officials who have been trained to use this deadly force. For everyone else, our answers must be found with other options.

We surround military bases with fences and gates with armed security personnel who check each and every ID. Video surveillance cameras are mounted in every bank in the country.

Bulletproof glass protects our transport vehicles from commercial businesses as they proceed to banks. Staff members enter buildings with magnetic badges that trigger door releases.

Are there reasons these have not been utilized in our schools -- or at least versions of them? The question is rhetorical. The answer is shameful -- we don't want to pay for it. We would rather take our chances. I am fully aware of the fact that, short of a force-field dome, there isn't anything that will completely neutralize the threats that exist outside our school walls, but to use this as an excuse to do nothing (or the bare minimum) is unconscionable.

Our kids are housed for the entire day in buildings that are beacons of vulnerability as they sit out in the open -- completely exposed. If we want to deter someone from breaching our school perimeters, we have to think like someone who has no sense of right or wrong. If we want to STOP a terrorist, we need to THINK like a terrorist.

We can no longer presume that schools are off limits to those who don't follow the rules. We can no longer avoid discussing the unspeakable. We can no longer pretend that our children will be spared violence. Our nation's most valuable resource is also our nation's most vulnerable underbelly.

When they are taken from us, we are brought to our knees. We have the resources to make change happen. We have the responsibility to do everything in our power to protect our children. The only thing we do not have is an excuse for inaction.

Stuart Stofferahn is the recruiting and retention superintendent for the Nebraska Air National Guard. He also is a certified teacher with a Master's Degree in Educational Administration.