

## Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School

On Wednesday, February 14, 2018, a mass shooting occurred at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. Nikolas Jacob Cruz, age 19, killed 17 people and wounded 14 more. There has been considerable discussion about the shortcomings of law enforcement agencies who had received information about Cruz's intentions as well as failures of some responding law enforcement officers to quickly intervene. It has also caused schools to review their protocols as it relates to safeguarding their students, faculty and staff. The focus of this article is on **"lockdown"** procedures.

Many schools have a policy that as soon as the active shooter alarm sounds, teachers lock the door of their classroom and will not allow anyone in. Students may be caught outside the classroom in the bathroom or hallway. They are left to fend for themselves as their pleas to get into a class room are ignored out of strict adherence to protocol. The concern is that the **"shooter"** could be just outside the classroom and using a student to gain access to the room, thereby endangering those inside.

Below is a partial reprint of an article which appeared in the New York Post on 03/03/2018, entitled, "Florida Shooting Survivor Calls out Teacher as Coward."

More than two weeks after the high-school shooting massacre in Parkland, Fla., anger and second-guessing continue to simmer there, with one student tweeting his teacher was a "coward" — triggering an online war of words.

Math teacher Jim Gard left "75% of his students out in the hallway to be slaughtered," junior Josh Gallagher claimed on Twitter on Feb. 28.

None of Gard's students would die in the Valentine's Day shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas HS, which left 14 students and three faculty slain.

Still, the teacher didn't unlock the math-class door when his terrified students banged on it from the hallway, even as shots rang out, Gallagher tweeted.

The left-out kids cowered in the hallway "for four total minutes ducking and in fear for our lives," before a different teacher let them inside another classroom, Gallagher tweeted.

"Omg. I'm so sorry to hear another shameful act of cowardice," wrote We R Kate Steinle at @No1islistening0.

"Jim Gard must live with what he did," responded Janeka Smith at @JanekaSmith1.

Meanwhile, the teacher counters that he was only following lockdown protocol — and says he was stunned to find himself publicly flogged on social media.

"I looked back down the hall and no one was around — no one," Gard insisted to the Sun-Sentinel, describing the moment before he retreated inside his classroom with six of his students.

"You have to close the door. That's protocol," Gard told the paper.

Most of his students, 13 in all, had lagged behind during what appeared at first to be a fire drill, Gard said, and weren't with him as he locked the door.

When the school sound system indicated a "Code Red" lockdown emergency, he and the half-dozen students with him huddled in the dark by his desk. He said he did hear a loud banging on the door at that point.

But "I told the kids we can't let anyone in," he told the paper. "We had no idea if it was a [lockdown] drill or not. "By the time I walked over to the door, the banging had stopped."

### **Summary**

Many school lockdown procedures are absolute. Once a door is locked, anyone caught outside the classroom is on their own. Policy makers are of the view that any student trying to access a classroom after the lockdown may be coerced into doing so by the shooter. Thus, if they let the person in, they may be letting in the shooter. Depending upon when the shooting occurs, (i.e., in between periods) this could leave many students and faculty members in the hallway. It should be noted, Cruz set off the fire alarm at Marjorie Stoneman Douglas High School so the students and faculty would come out into the hallways.

Each measure brings unintended consequences and there are no absolutes. In addition to considering whether teachers should lock doors without exception, consider making bathrooms an area of refuge. It's likely that's where the student(s) will get caught during the transition. Allowing a student to lock the bathroom from the inside and hide will provide virtually the same level of protection as a classroom. Another option is to create additional areas of refuge on each floor, such as faculty lounges. No student should find themselves without an option to seek refuge if escape is no longer an option.