

Ensuring the safety of children at school should always be the top priority. It's essential to create a secure and nurturing environment for their learning and well-being. This is non-negotiable.

The ongoing situation at Centralia Middle School is toxic. The fights, the gang activity, the drugs, the overall violence has crept into every nook and cranny of those walls. Yesterday, a student was kicked in the head repeatedly to the point of being unconscious. Think about that for a moment. The level of malice and anger it would take for a child to do this to another child. What if that were your child? Think about the students that witnessed this horrid attack. The trauma and fear that would inevitably bring.

Students and staff at Centralia Middle School are living in a constant state of fight or flight. They aren't thinking about the fun project in their next class, or sitting with friends at lunch, they aren't thinking of dances, or sports, how could they possibly. They are so inundated with fear that they will be the next to be jumped in the bathroom, or pinned in the hallways, they are wondering if they are the next to be beaten unconscious. Think I'm wrong? Talk to your kids, ask them if they feel safe at school. Ask them if they've ever been threatened, bullied or assaulted.

There have been several lockdowns/secure and teaches at Centralia Middle School in less than a month of being in school. This trauma triggers the "fight or flight" response, which is the body's natural reaction to perceived threats. This response can lead to heightened anxiety, increased heart rate, and other physical and emotional reactions. Seeking professional help and support is crucial for these kids who have experienced trauma to help them cope and heal. When these threats are weekly they are not able to cope and work through their emotions leading to larger problems. This goes for staff as well.

Centralia Middle School has had several administrators in 20 years! Clearly there is a problem. Only a handful of staff are certified in right response training, they obviously can't be everywhere at once. Our kids are in the care of these teachers for 7 hours a day, if they aren't trained or willing to protect our kids in moments like this when our kids need them the most they are in the wrong profession. If things are so out of control that the school cannot guarantee our children's safety I have a feeling more parents will be transferring their kids out this district. Our kids deserve better that's the bottom line. Thank you to the staff and administrators that are giving their all I know this is a tough time for Centralia, but I know a lot of you have the same concerns.

We must do right by our kids. It's not enough to stand on the sidelines wishing and hoping for their success. You've got one shot at raising your kids to be successful, responsible, kind, and honest. Step up and be the parent they need you to be. Be loud, be courageous, be an advocate for your child because if you won't, who will be?

Sarah Holmes