

Body of student who shot two Denver high school faculty found in Park County, Colorado after police manhunt

Alex Findijs
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Two school administrators were injured after being shot by a student at East High School in Denver, Colorado, Wednesday morning. Eric Sinclair, East High's dean of culture, and Jerald Mason, a restorative practice coordinator in the dean's office, were shot and taken to a hospital for intensive care. Sinclair remains in serious condition as of this writing while Mason was discharged in "stable condition."

The student was identified on Thursday as 17-year-old Austin Lyle after his body was found in Park County, Colorado, following a multi-hour chase involving local police and officers from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF). Lyle's manner of death has not been officially declared by the coroner's office as an investigation and autopsy remain ongoing.

Lyle was a student at the school and was undergoing a "safety plan" where he agreed to be patted down for weapons every day. The pat-down reportedly took place in front of the school away from other students at the time of the shooting. According to police reports, Lyle was found with a handgun by the faculty and the shooting took place after the firearm was discovered.

Lyle went through the safety plan after being expelled from Overland High School and moving to East High School. The reason for Lyle's expulsion and his participation in the safety plan were not made public due to student privacy laws, according to Denver police. However, they did confirm that he had not been found in possession of a weapon before.

East High students will remain at home for the rest of the week following the shooting.

In response, the Denver Public School District

Superintendent Alex Marrero announced that two armed police officers would be stationed at the school during operational hours through the end of the academic year.

This decision conflicts with official district policy to remove "school resource officers" from all Denver public school campuses. The policy was implemented in the summer of 2020 in response to the George Floyd protests and research that stationing police officers at schools increased the likelihood of students entering the criminal justice system over minor infractions, particularly black and Hispanic students between the ages of 10 and 15 who made up the majority of students ticketed or arrested by school officers between 2014 and 2019 according to the district.

Marrero acknowledged that his decision contradicted school board policy but argued that he could "no longer stand on the sidelines" and that he was "willing to accept the consequences of my actions." He was supported by Democratic Denver Mayor Michael Hancock who said in response to the shooting that "removing [school resource officers] was a mistake and we must move swiftly to correct it."

Such statements make it clear that the Democrats are capitalizing on the tragedy to push for the reintroduction of police on school campuses and the rollback of concessions to student demands during the George Floyd protests to "defund the police" in the state capital.

The presence of an officer on site would have been unlikely to affect the outcome. The shooting occurred during a pre-arranged pat-down of a student, which would have been implemented by a faculty member, regardless. Additionally, there is no evidence that

having an officer present would have prevented the shooting after the discovery of the handgun. The experience of the 2022 Uvalde, Texas, shooting, in which multiple heavily armed police officers did nothing while a gunman killed multiple children, counters the claim that having police on campus prevents shootings.

Academic research on school shootings has repeatedly found no association between an on-campus police presence and the prevention of gun violence and mass shootings at schools.

While school and city officials have called for increasing armed police presence, students have called for stronger gun control. East High students held a rally at the state Capitol building earlier this month demanding action on gun violence after 16-year-old Luis Garcia was shot in a car near the school. Garcia died in the hospital two weeks later.

At least 1,000 students walked out of class on March 3 to protest Garcia's death along with students from three other schools. The protests follow a series of walkouts and protests that occurred in Denver following the Uvalde massacre last year.

Colorado Democrats have introduced a series of bills in the state legislature that would address some demands of students, including raising the age to purchase a firearm to 21, implementing a three day waiting period, and expanding the list of people who can file an Extreme Risk Protection Order to have a person's guns taken away.

However, regardless of whether these bills pass, they will not address the core causes of gun violence in the United States. Mass shootings are the product of a sick social and economic order that continuously places profit over the lives of young people and the working class. Both the Democrats and Republicans, who represent and defend the capitalist system, ultimately bear responsibility for the crisis of gun violence in American schools.

The United States has been in a state of unending war for longer than high school students have been alive. A deadly pandemic has been allowed to kill at least 1 million people in order to protect the financial interests of a small financial elite. And police in the US kill more than 1,000 people a year while brutalizing wide sections of the population.



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