

VOICE OF THE PEOPLE

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JOHN OVERMYER

Patterns of violence

As we read about the continuing violent and unnecessary deaths of Chicago Public School students nearly daily, organizations and educators across our city need to take this message to heart. According to the U.S. Department of Education, "patterns of violence often begin early in life, but school programs can still help ameliorate some of the effects."

The rising death count only underscores the need for school-based violence prevention education—early and often. There are basic ways that our communities can support this school and student priority need.

One: We need to identify more non-profits, government agencies, university programs and corporations that are able and willing to deliver violence-prevention education in our schools at no cost.

Two: We need to offer service organizations training and support to ensure that their programs are effective and appropri-

ate for the classroom setting and for the diverse student populations throughout Chicago.

Three: We can fill an important and specific gap—high-quality curricula and programs for young children in kindergarten through 3rd grade. Whether that means replicating successful projects or creating new programs, we need to ensure that this happens.

Chicago has the resources and the infrastructure to make sure that 10 years from now, today's 1st graders do not have to experience the fear and sadness we are all feeling. With the support of the school system, the police department and the incredible network of service organizations throughout this city, we can make a change.

—Jane Mentzinger, executive director,
Communities In Schools of Chicago