Facilitator Notes: Rampage School Shooters (8 Slides)

Participant 'Take-Away' Element(s):
An introduction to the research around the Rampage School Shooters (& busting some myths)
The importance of fostering School Connectedness

Facilitation Type(s) Involved:
Floor Cards

Slide #1:
This is a place holder slide for you to introduce yourselves and give any brief introduction to the topic, if that is appropriate. Move to the next slide.

Slide #2
Move them to standing circles. It is always better and more fun to have more than one circle. It is also better to have no more than 10 – 15 people in each circle. Each circle could have three – five people, if you have a smaller group. You will have to announce how many circles there will be and how many individuals in each circle. Everyone who is a participant for these facilitation exercises will have already worked in standing circles, so they will know exactly what to do. However, if this is the very first time you are introducing standing circles to the group, you will have to be very specific about where they can stand (not around a table as often happens the first time) and that they need to have enough floor space. Also, if this IS the first time they are working in circles make sure they understand that the cards should remain on the floor so that everyone can see all of them. In other words, they should not pick them up! Make it clear that they can manipulate them with their hands or their feet to create the two piles. It is very important that initially you just read the direction slide exactly as it is and do not embellish it.

Give them some time to work on the task without any interference or interjections from you. If you are concerned that they need more information about the task, after you read the slide you can ask, "what are your questions?" Hearing nothing just back away and let them work. If anyone asks, "how many?" respond by saying, "Oh, you want a clue?" Then let them know that there are exactly five factors that every Rampage School Shooter has had in common from the early 1970's to the present and those that will happen in the future. If no one asks for a clue, after a few minutes say, "would you like a clue?" Almost never does anyone say, "no!" Even if you get that rare response, you want to let them know that there are five factors that all Rampage School Shooters have had in common. When everyone has five factors, move to the processing of the task.

All floor card tasks are processed the same way. Begin with one group (this is why each group has different colored cards). Ask them to mention one factor that they are pretty sure is on the list. Once that factor is shared, check in with the other group(s). If everyone

agrees *and it is correct*, “that’s correct, you have one!” Move to the next group and do the same thing. If there is *not* agreement, say, “we’re not going to tell you at this point if that one is correct; we’ll put it to the side for the time being.” Usually you will get at least three – four of them correct as you move from circle to circle around the room. If on the first round the groups get all five of them correct, you can make a comment like, “you are all the ‘A’ team! If you do not have full agreement, make sure that you mention every card that the groups mentioned (the correct and the incorrect ones) that remain unconfirmed. Usually with two cards being considered, one of them is correct and you can say, “one of the two is correct.” If there are more than two being considered, you should say, “of the three (or four) you have mentioned, one (or two) of them are correct. You can turn them back to their circles to figure out what they think is/are the correct factors. Or you can have the big group talk it out and see what they come up with. If time is consideration, you can just let them know which one(s) is/are correct. Once you get the group understanding which five factors are correct, move to the next slide.

Slide #3:

You can keep them standing while you go through all the five factors that every Rampage School Shooter has had in common explaining each of the factors and let them know there is no real order; they are all evident. You should also let them know that they are all *necessary but not sufficient.* What is meant by this is that there are students walking the halls of our schools now that have all these factors, but they will not create tragedy in their schools. They are more likely to be chronically absent, isolating themselves in cafeterias, hugging walls, etc. However, when there IS one of these tragedies, these five factors and only these five are the toxic mix. If we can take away just one or two of them, tragedy is avoided.

It is well documented that the majority of these shooters are white boys, and they were all horribly treated pervasively both physically and emotionally, not just once or twice and it appears that most, if not all of them were relentlessly told that they were not *real* boys; they were weak, sissies, girls, gay (whether or not they were), etc. They also were often going to school in homophobic environments. It is no accident that they brought guns to school because the only emotion boys are allowed to show is anger and the ultimate show of masculinity is to be violent. Weapons are the ultimate form of violence. What is meant by ‘under the radar screen’ is that in many cases they were reporting the mistreatment to adults who met them with comments such as, “you’re just too sensitive,” or “just put on blinders; they’re just like that, so ignore it,” or “it’s almost the end of the semester, so just hang in there.” All these comments are ‘code’ for “I don’t know how to intervene.” Sometimes the adults were even complicit with comments such as, “you *are* fat, so just lose weight,” or “it’s your choice to paint your nails or color your hair, so you’ve brought this on yourself.” Every living shooter (and those leaving other written material) said that there was not one adult in school they could count on or go to for help. Sometimes they didn’t even

have such an adult at home. They all went to school in environments where there were very ridged perimeters of acceptance and they fell outside of those perimeters. There has never been a Rampage School Shooting in an urban school (not that this fact gives such schools a pass on all of this) because the expert sociologists believe that in such schools it is easier to find a niche to belong. Each of these perpetrators did have layers of personal problems but they were not all psychotic. Some of them had IEPs or 504 Plans, but not all. Some of them were very good students with no history of misbehavior. If they did not have these kinds of issues then they had family issues: trauma; for example, there was violence in the home or abuse or neglect or maybe they were a pawn in a contentious divorce. Some of them had both personal issues *and* family toxicity. And finally, they easily got their hands on guns/explosive devices. There are more guns than people in this country, so accessing weaponry is far too easy. After explaining all this, move to the final slide.

Slide #4:
This is simplified list of the five factors. Read the question at the bottom of the slide and let the group answer the question, "which do we as educators have the most control over [if we are working together systemically]? They should identify three factors (marginalized by peers, having a caring adult and being different is okay). The other two (guns and mental health issues) are where the media and legislators focus their attention after one of these tragedies, but educators have the least control over. When they answer the question accurately, move to the next slide.

Slide #5:
Ask the group what is the 'flip' (opposite) of these three. They should answer what is on slide #6. As soon as they say the three things out loud, move to the next slide.

Slide #6:
Read what is on the slide without commentary and then move to the next slide.

Slide #7:
This slide shows the reason for looking at the research around the Rampage School Shooters. It aligns the measures of School Connectedness with the risk factors for experiencing a Rampage School Shooting. The alignment is vivid. None of the school shooters were connected to school. So, ensuring that these tragedies do not happen, instead of having lockdown drill, fostering Connectedness is the answer. It may still be necessary to engage in lockdown drills, but not for Rampage School Shootings. If just one or two of the risk factors can be eliminated, by fostering Connectedness, these kinds of school shootings will not happen. When everyone has taken this in, move to the final slide.

Slide #8:
This slide is meant to indicate that the learning task is finished, so the group will know that your facilitation is over and we are ready to reflect on it.