

Strategies for preventing school violence

The school shootings in Jokela and Kauhajoki, and other places in the world, raise the question about how to prevent such acts in the future.

As an NGO (non-governmental organization) Folkhälsan is a Swedish-speaking in the social welfare and health care sector in Finland (since 1921), which carries out scientific research and provides social welfare and health care services as well as information and counselling in order to *promote health and quality of life*.

The activities of Folkhälsan are based on a holistic perspective of health issues, which views the person as an indivisible whole. As we see it, work to improve people's state of health should include not only the social and health care services but also on other sectors of society. Health and wellbeing should be taken into account in everything we do; in education, working life, housing and municipal planning. Currently, the organization is working with adventure education and proactively preventing marginalization among youth in the age-group 16-21 by focusing on violence prevention and creating a safer school environment for students, i.e. in vocational colleges.

In this paper Berghäll & Leppäkari will present preliminary strategies based on the organization's many years of experience and current work with health promoting with youth. The authors will be drawing parallels between theories and shared field experience, and thus putting forward a fresh approach to prevent further acts of school violence from the perspective of a NGO.

About the authors:

Mr. Patrik Berghäll is an adventure educator working at Folkhälsans Förbund rf., teaching and training in methods of adventure education, and survival skills. Berghäll has a long working record in the field and has worked with different groups of young people, from kindergarten to adults. He also works with outdoor education (utomhuspedagogik) in schools and develop programs in collaboration with teachers.

Dr. Maria Leppäkari is project manager of Folkhälsans Förbund rf European Social Fund (ESF) project "På rätt spår 2008-2011", (eng. "On the right path"). The project focuses on students at vocational schools by developing models and methods for promoting school motivation and preventing youth marginalisation. Leppäkari is an established expert on religious representations and symbols, and their impact on both physical and verbal violence. She is the author of *Apocalyptic Representations*. Brill Academic Publishers, Numen series vol. 111 (2006) and *Hungry for Heaven. The Dynamics of Apocalyptic Violence*, VDM Verlag (2008).