

# Education: Failures and Family Involvement

---

Compiled by Peter Langman, Ph.D.

This document focuses on school shooters' negative experiences with school personnel, whether that involved academic failures, disciplinary actions by administrators, or other conflicts. In some cases, the perpetrators clearly targeted school personnel in response to perceived injustices. In other cases, there may have been no direct connection between negative experiences and victim selection. Even in these cases, however, failures, frustrations, and conflicts may have combined with other factors to put the perpetrators on the path of violence. A second focus is the involvement of family members in education, primarily in terms of employment in the field, but also in terms of their own academic achievements. As discussed in my book *School Shooters: Understanding High School, College, and Adult Perpetrators*, in some cases there may have been a connection between family involvement in education, the distress and conflict caused by the perpetrators' academic failures, and the selection of both venues (e.g., type of school) and victims (e.g., family members). Finally, education-related targets are noted; family members involved in education who were targeted are listed in parentheses. It is not assumed that in all cases in which shooters had relatives involved in education, that this was a factor in the attacks. Nonetheless, because school shootings occur in educational settings, this document presents information regarding both the family's connection to education as well as the perpetrators' experiences in education.

Name	Failure / Discipline / Conflict	Family Involvement	Education-Related Targets
<b>SECONDARY SCHOOL SHOOTERS</b>			
Michael Slobodian	Two teachers contacted his mother about his skipping classes		Intended to kill both teachers; one he did not find, but he killed the other
Robert Poulin	Academic struggles Failed first assignment previous spring	Mother: lunchroom supervisor Father: schoolteacher	(Contemplated killing mother) (Contemplated killing father)
Brenda Spencer	Disliked school Fought with father about attending "Severe scholastic problems" led to switching schools, and then switching back again Vandalized elementary school (same one she attacked) Truancy	Father: university audio-visual technician	
James Kearbey	Was failing all subjects	Father: schoolteacher	Shot principal and two teachers; not clear if they were specifically targeted

<b>Name</b>	<b>Failure / Discipline / Conflict</b>	<b>Family Involvement</b>	<b>Education-Related Targets</b>
<b>Heather Smith</b>	Obsessive about grades; slit wrists when they dropped slightly Lost race for vice-president		
<b>Floyd Warmesley</b>	Suspended twice that year		Targeted principal
<b>Kristofer Hans</b>	Was failing French	Father: school psychologist	Intended to kill French teacher
<b>Nicholas Elliot</b>	Dyslexic	Mother: school nurse	
<b>Eric Houston</b>	Placed in special education Molested by teacher The teacher who molested him also failed him in the class which meant Houston could not graduate		Targeted and killed the teacher who molested and failed him
<b>Scott Pennington</b>	Low grade on midterm exam devastated him; fought with teacher to get the grade raised; she refused to change it		Killed the teacher who gave him a low grade
<b>Clay Shrout</b>	Grades declined to Cs, Ds, and Fs English teacher called mother about major assignment Shrout did not hand in Suspended for bringing stun gun to school, given 50 hours of community service	Grandfather: college instructor Mother: on three PTAs, was president of one Mother: former schoolteacher Mother: Sunday school teacher Father: Sunday school teacher	Intended to kill English teacher and assistant principal (Killed mother) (Killed father)
<b>Toby Sincinco</b>	Expelled from school Returned on probationary status Suspended again, pending expulsion		Shot teacher
<b>Jamie Rouse</b>	Falsely accused of truancy Feared he would fail 12th grade Hadn't taken courses necessary to go to college	Grandparent: schoolteacher Grandparent: schoolteacher Aunt: schoolteacher Uncle: schoolteacher	Talked of shooting principal Tried to shoot coach Intended to kill teachers

<b>Name</b>	<b>Failure / Discipline / Conflict</b>	<b>Family Involvement</b>	<b>Education-Related Targets</b>
<b>Barry Loukaitis</b>	Grades had declined Detention for repeated tardiness Hated vice-principal Hated algebra teacher		Talked of killing vice-principal Shot algebra teacher
<b>Evan Ramsey</b>	Explosive temper in school Suspensions 12 disciplinary infractions one year 5 infractions the next year	Foster mother: school superintendent	Killed principal
<b>Luke Woodham</b>	Suspended multiple times in 6th and 7th grades Repeated 9th grade	Mother: had been a teacher	(Killed his mother)
<b>[Grant Boyette]</b> <i>[not a shooter; told Woodham to attack]</i>		[Mother: schoolteacher]	[Plotted with peers to kill certain teachers]
<b>Michael Carneal</b>	Five disciplinary infractions in three months before shooting		Talked of taking over the school Talked of shooting administrators
<b>Andrew Golden</b>	Minor disciplinary issues Tired of teachers' "crap"		Shot a teacher
<b>Mitchell Johnson</b>	Disciplinary infractions Several in-school suspensions		Shot one of the teachers who had disciplined him (not clear if accidental or deliberate)
<b>Andrew Wurst</b>	Struggled academically 8th grade: mostly Ds and Fs		
<b>Kip Kinkel</b>	Repeated 1st grade 3rd grade: special education 4th grade: diagnosed with learning disability 2-day suspension for kicking peer in head 3-day suspension for throwing pencil at peer Academic disappointment to his parents Homeschooled at one point Suspended pending formal expulsion hearing	Mother: schoolteacher Father: schoolteacher	(Killed mother) (Killed father) Committed school shooting day after suspension

Name	Failure / Discipline / Conflict	Family Involvement	Education-Related Targets
<b>Eric Harris</b>	Suspended for hacking Complained that education forces conformity, goes against human nature, turns people into robots		
<b>Dylan Klebold</b>	Suspended for hacking Suspended for defacing locker Defiant, hostile, intimidating toward teachers	Mother: had been a teacher; worked at community college	
<b>Seth Trickey</b>	[No known academic or disciplinary issues]	Grandfather: high school teacher Grandmother: elementary school teacher Great aunt: elementary school teacher Great uncle: high school teacher Great uncle: high school teacher Great uncle: teacher	
<b>Nathaniel Brazill</b>	Suspended by school counselor on the last day of school		Returned to school the same day, intending to kill the school counselor but ended up killing a teacher who wouldn't let him see his girlfriend
<b>Andy Williams</b>	Minor discipline for goofing off in class Frequent truancy Neglected homework, grades declined Erased voicemail messages from the school to his father; intercepted his report cards before father could see them Detentions for tardiness and skipping classes Enraged when reprimanded by teacher in class a few days before his attack		
<b>Jason Hoffman</b>	In special education some years Repeated 12th grade Conflict with dean of his high school Did poorly in class at community college		Tried to kill dean he had grudge against

Name	Failure / Discipline / Conflict	Family Involvement	Education-Related Targets
<b>Robert Steinhäuser</b>	Rude to teachers; did not take discipline well Failed exams Aspired to career with computers; failed his computer class Chronic tardiness, reprimanded Failed 12th grade twice Expelled for forging physician's note		Targeted faculty and administrators, killing 12 teachers and a vice-principal
<b>Jeffrey Weise</b>	Repeated 8th grade Some sources said he repeated grades twice or more On homebound instruction: some reports he was angry about being kicked out, but there are many contradictory reports about why he was out of school		Shot one teacher; unclear if he specifically targeted her
<b>Alvaro Castillo</b>	Attended Durham Technical Community College; outcome unknown	Father: custodian in elementary school; severe pressure on kids to succeed academically Sister and her boyfriend attended Durham	(Killed his father)
<b>Eric Hainstock</b>	Academic struggles, special education Repeated 6th grade Out of school suspension and in-school suspension shortly before attack Multiple legal charges for aggressive behavior at school shortly before attack		Targeted and killed principal Tried to shoot a teacher
<b>Sebastian Bosse</b>	Repeated grades three times Hated school Thought about dropping out		
<b>Douglas Chanthabouly</b>	Received special education services		
<b>Asa Coon</b>	Suspended ten days previous year Suspended shortly before attack Angry at teacher whose class he was failing		Sought out and shot the teacher whose class he was failing

Name	Failure / Discipline / Conflict	Family Involvement	Education-Related Targets
<b>Pekka-Eric Auvinen</b>	Grades declined as he got older		Shot head teacher; unknown if he targeted her
<b>Tim Kretschmer</b>	Repeated a grade Struggled academically: tutored in German, English, math, science Complained teachers didn't call on him enough and gave unfair grades Desperate about his lack of success		Shot some teachers, but unclear if they were specifically targeted
<b>Robert Butler</b>	Received long suspension following arrest on school property		Returned to school the same day and shot the vice-principal and principal
<b>T.J. Lane</b>	Attended alternative school; not known if this was his choice or how he felt about it		
<b>Jose Reyes</b>	Significant academic struggles; did 1st grade work in 6th grade, special education		
<b>Karl Pierson</b>	Speech and debate coach demoted Pierson from his position as team captain Suspended for inappropriate behavior in class Sent home from school multiple times for inappropriate behavior Grades plummeted to D's and F's Grades poor, graduation in jeopardy	Mother: worked for Douglas County School District	Intended to kill his speech and debate coach and other specific people whose names have been redacted in his journal
<b>Jaylen Fryberg</b>	Suspended a week before the attack for fighting Suspended from football team for fight	Mother: School Board Vice President	
<b>Jesse Osborne</b>	Expelled from middle school for attacking student with hatchet; subsequently homeschooled		

---

**COLLEGE SHOOTERS**

---

Name	Failure / Discipline / Conflict	Family Involvement	Education-Related Targets
Wesley Clow	Was in danger of not graduating due to poor academic performance		Killed professor
Charles Whitman	Lost military scholarship due to poor grades Wanted to be a mechanical engineer; gave up Wanted to be a career marine officer; gave up Wanted to be an architectural engineer; gave up Wanted to be a real estate agent; gave up Wanted to be a lawyer; gave up Decided to drop out; changed mind	Wife: school teacher Mother-in-law: schoolteacher	(Killed wife)
Edward Allaway	Conflict with coworkers at university Felt persecuted Became combative Wanted to work elsewhere on campus	Sister: university secretary	Shot coworkers
Gang Lu	Failed to win prize for best dissertation Failed to become professor, blamed his professors for not getting letters of recommendation mailed in time Threatened to sue university		Shot personnel in his department at the university
Valery Fabrikant	Years of conflict with university Accused university of unethical research/publication practices Accused university of financial fraud Insubordinate behavior Threatened university personnel Sued the university		Targeted university personnel
Wayne Lo	Fined for disciplinary infraction in residence hall Said he had power to bring the campus to its knees	Mother: schoolteacher	Threatened to kill residential staff Committed random attack on campus

Name	Failure / Discipline / Conflict	Family Involvement	Education-Related Targets
<b>Frederick Davidson</b>	Felt mistreated by professors Believed professors conspired to keep him from getting jobs Thesis was turned down once; feared it would be turned down again		Shot members of his thesis committee
<b>Peter Odighizuwa</b>	Attended Ohio State University; did not earn degree Severe conflict with law school Filed grievance against professor Filed grievance against staff in financial aid office Belligerent with professors Had Ds and Fs his last semester Decided to withdraw from law school		Targeted university personnel
<b>Robert Flores</b>	Severe conflict with university Complained to dean that he wasn't called on enough in class Dean warned him twice that his behavior was so inappropriate that he could be expelled Failed rotation in pediatric nursing Failed another class Conflict with another professor		Killed the three professors he had conflicts/ failures with
<b>Biswanath Halder</b>	Attended New York University; did not earn degree Attended University of Massachusetts; did not earn degree Attended Boston University; did not earn degree Sued Case Western Reserve University		Sought to kill university personnel
<b>Seung Hui Cho</b>	Removed from class due to behavior Professor Bean recommended he drop class; Cho was livid and yelled at Bean Campus police twice said leave women alone		On day of attack, sent letter to English department expressing his rage toward Professor Bean



Name	Failure / Discipline / Conflict	Family Involvement	Education-Related Targets
<b>Steven Kazmierczak</b>	<p>Dropped out of courses at community college</p> <p>Received degree in sociology from Northern Illinois University (NIU)</p> <p>Chastised by professor/mentor for inappropriate behavior on department discussion board</p> <p>Complained about graduate school</p> <p>Significant career confusion: considered computer science, political science, sociology, law school, public administration</p> <p>Started graduate program in sociology at NIU, but the department underwent changes, resulting in Kazmierczak's transfer to Illinois University</p>	<p>Sister: completed graduate degree at university he was attending at time of his attack; she may have been employed in special education</p>	<p>Committed attack at former university (NIU) in auditorium where he had had most of his sociology classes</p>
<b>Matti Saari</b>	<p>Due to relocations, had to change schools at least six times</p> <p>Dropped out of upper secondary school</p> <p>Dropped out of vocational school</p> <p>Dropped out of another school</p>		
<b>O'Dane Maye</b>	<p>Withdrew from university several months before his attack</p>		<p>Returned to university to shoot random people</p>
<b>Amy Bishop</b>	<p>Failed to get tenure</p> <p>Appealed the decision and lost</p> <p>Sued the university</p>	<p>Father: college professor</p>	<p>Shot colleagues in her department</p>
<b>One Goh</b>	<p>Failed to graduate from nursing program</p> <p>Fought with administration about tuition refund</p>		<p>Intended to kill woman he blamed for not getting his tuition refund</p>
<b>Chris Harper-Mercer</b>	<p>Attended alternative high school</p> <p>Enrolled in El Camino College for two years; outcome unknown</p> <p>Was enrolled at Umpqua Community College</p>		

Name	Failure / Discipline / Conflict	Family Involvement	Education-Related Targets
<b>Mainak Sarkar</b>	Conflict with professor		Killed professor
<b>ABERRANT ADULT SHOOTERS</b>			
<b>Robert Smith</b>	Reportedly repeated grades		Considered killing teachers
<b>Tyrone Mitchell</b>	Childhood school experiences unknown Took university classes but apparently never earned a degree	Fiancée: preschool teacher Sister: teacher's aide	Attacked his former elementary school
<b>Laurie Dann</b>	In special education classes in middle school Did very poorly in high school; resorted to cheating to get by Transferred from Drake University to University of Arizona, where she did poorly, was put on academic probation Dropped out of UA Then re-enrolled, and withdrew Dropped out of a class at Northwestern University Then withdrew or failed to complete other courses there Went to the University of Wisconsin, but completed no courses	Self: studied to be elementary teacher Sister-in-law: schoolteacher	Tried to burn down two elementary schools, committed school shooting at one of them
<b>Patrick Purdy</b>	Repeated 5th grade Dropped out of school at 15 At nearly 16, enrolled in adult education program, but dropped out the next day Completed some classes at college and technical school, but quit a welding class		

<b>Name</b>	<b>Failure / Discipline / Conflict</b>	<b>Family Involvement</b>	<b>Education-Related Targets</b>
<b>Marc Lépine</b>	Failed two classes at St. Laurent Junior College Dropped out of program Enrolled in two summer classes but dropped them before they started Studied computers but left program before completion Rejected by École Polytechnique in 1987 Rejected by École Polytechnique in 1989	Mother: university student	Attacked Ecole Polytechnique
<b>Thomas Hamilton</b>	Angry that teachers warned students away from his camps/clubs Conflicts over use of space at schools		Attacked local school where teachers had warned students about him
<b>Jillian Robbins</b>	Dropped out of high school Never attended college	Mother: college instructor and administrator Stepfather: college professor Argued with mother about education	Attacked school mother had attended/worked at and where stepfather taught
<b>Kimveer Gill</b>	Dropped out of Vanier College after one semester Dropped out of Rosemont Technology Centre after six months	Father: college professor Mother: attended Vanier College Argued with parents about education	Considered attacking Vanier College, but shot people at another college
<b>Jiverly Wong</b>	Struggled with learning English as a second language		Targeted people in his former classroom
<b>Bruco Eastwood</b>	Failed to graduate high school Failed GED test		Failure to get GED prevented him from joining military and he committed attack shortly afterwards
<b>Adam Lanza</b>	Several school changes to meet his needs Homebound instruction Failed to get degree from Western Connecticut State University Cried, called himself a loser for not being able to handle the work Attended Norwalk Community College; did not earn degree	Mother: home-schooled Lanza; volunteered at Sandy Hook Elementary School Father: instructor at two universities Stepmother: university librarian Grandmother: elementary school nurse	(Killed mother)

Name	Failure / Discipline / Conflict	Family Involvement	Education-Related Targets
<b>John Zawahri</b>	In high school, defiant, disruptive, poor grades Transferred to alternative school Removed from school for psychiatric evaluation in response to his threatening a teacher; he was arrested and placed in a residential program		
<b>Elliot Rodger</b>	Took class at Pierce College; dropped out Attended Moorpark College; dropped out Re-enrolled at Moorpark; completed one class; signed up for three classes the following semester, dropped one, stopped going to the other two, but showed up for the final exams Enrolled at Santa Barbara City College; finished some classes, dropped others; did not earn degree		
<b>Aaron Ybarra</b>	Dropped out of cyberschool without receiving diploma Took courses at Edmonds Community College; did not earn degree	Mother: administrative services manager in community college (same one Ybarra attended and did not graduate from)	
<b>NON-SCHOOL SHOOTERS</b>			
<b>Stephen Morgan</b>	Several school changes in adolescence; took extra half-year to graduate high school Two semesters at University of Colorado, then left Took course at New York University Signed up for classes at University of Colorado; outcome unknown Registered for class at University of Colorado, but withdrew	Father: graduated from Harvard Business School and had taught there	Morgan did not commit a school shooting, but he had considered doing so at Wesleyan University. Instead, he stalked a young woman he knew from New York University who attended Wesleyan and gunned her down while she was off campus.

Name	Failure / Discipline / Conflict	Family Involvement	Education-Related Targets
<b>Jared Loughner</b>	<p>Dropped out of high school before his senior year; enrolled in Pima Community College</p> <p>Campus police intervened five times due to his disruptive behavior in class</p> <p>Kicked out of a class due to inappropriate behavior</p> <p>Suspended from Pima pending a mental health evaluation that would clear him to return</p> <p>Extremely hostile toward Pima</p> <p>Made video titled “Pima Community College School – Genocide”</p>	<p>Grandfather: schoolteacher</p> <p>Grandmother: school librarian</p> <p>Father had degrees from three prestigious institutions (Stanford, UCLA, and Berkeley)</p> <p>Father’s success may have exacerbated Holmes’s sense of failure</p>	<p>Loughner was enraged toward Pima Community College but for some reason did not commit his attack there, choosing instead to do so at a public event involving Gabrielle Giffords.</p>
<b>James Holmes</b>	<p>Struggled academically during first year in Ph.D. program</p> <p>Failed oral exam</p> <p>Decided to drop out of the program</p> <p>Reported homicidal thoughts to psychiatrist at University of Colorado, stating he wanted to kill people to make up for his failure</p> <p>Psychiatrist received threats from Holmes</p>	<p>Grandfather: schoolteacher</p> <p>Grandmother: school librarian</p> <p>Father had degrees from three prestigious institutions (Stanford, UCLA, and Berkeley)</p> <p>Father’s success may have exacerbated Holmes’s sense of failure</p>	<p>Holmes had threatened people at the University of Colorado, but despite his hostility toward the institution chose instead to commit a rampage attack at a movie theatre.</p>