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The Six Year Old Accused of Shooting His Teacher Shouldn't Be Punished Under the Law

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According to the police, a **6-year-old boy** at Richneck Elementary School in Virginia used a gun legally purchased by his mother to **intentionally shoot his teacher** on Friday. The event is shocking and unnerving, and, as with other crimes, we instinctively want justice for the victim and a way to ensure the perpetrator doesn't do further harm.

So it's easy to see this child as deeply troubled and label him a menace to society. Some of us may want to lock him up and throw away the key. But as a psychologist who researches traumatic stress and treats its survivors, I hope we don't. Instead, I hope we have compassion and provide mental health intervention for the injured teacher, the classmates who witnessed the shooting, the community that's reeling from the attack — and also for the child who pulled the trigger. Why? Because, **research** shows that most children who get intervention early for violent behaviors recover.