

# RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF WASHINGTON POST'S SCHOOL SHOOTING DATABASE

---

*Dhairyasheel Patil*

*CS-GY 6313 B*

The Washington Post's School Shooting Database visualization serves as a powerful example of data-driven advocacy journalism, combining rigorous methodology with compelling visual narrative to illuminate the persistent crisis of gun violence in American schools.

## Narrative Structure and Persuasive Techniques

The visualization employs a chronological narrative structure, using the Columbine massacre as a historical anchor point. This choice frames the data within collective memory, making the information more accessible and emotionally resonant. The interactive timeline allows users to explore individual incidents, transforming abstract statistics into concrete, human stories.

## Visual Elements and Message

The visualization's effectiveness stems from its:

- Clean, minimalist design that emphasizes data clarity
- Interactive elements that encourage user engagement
- Color coding to distinguish different types of incidents
- Temporal mapping that reveals patterns and frequency

## Data Integrity and Ethics

The database maintains high ethical standards through:

- Rigorous verification processes
- Clear methodology documentation
- Transparent inclusion criteria
- Regular updates and corrections

## Impact Analysis

The visualization succeeds in its advocacy mission by presenting irrefutable evidence of a systemic problem while avoiding sensationalism. Its strength lies in letting the data speak for itself, allowing readers to draw their own conclusions from a comprehensive and well-documented dataset. The interactive elements transform passive readers into active participants in data exploration, potentially increasing the likelihood of advocacy engagement.

The visualization's main limitation is its relatively subtle call to action, though this may be a deliberate choice to maintain journalistic objectivity while still motivating change through awareness.

# More than 383,000 students have experienced gun violence at school since Columbine

There have been 417 school shootings since 1999, according to Post data

One dot represents 20 children exposed to gun violence

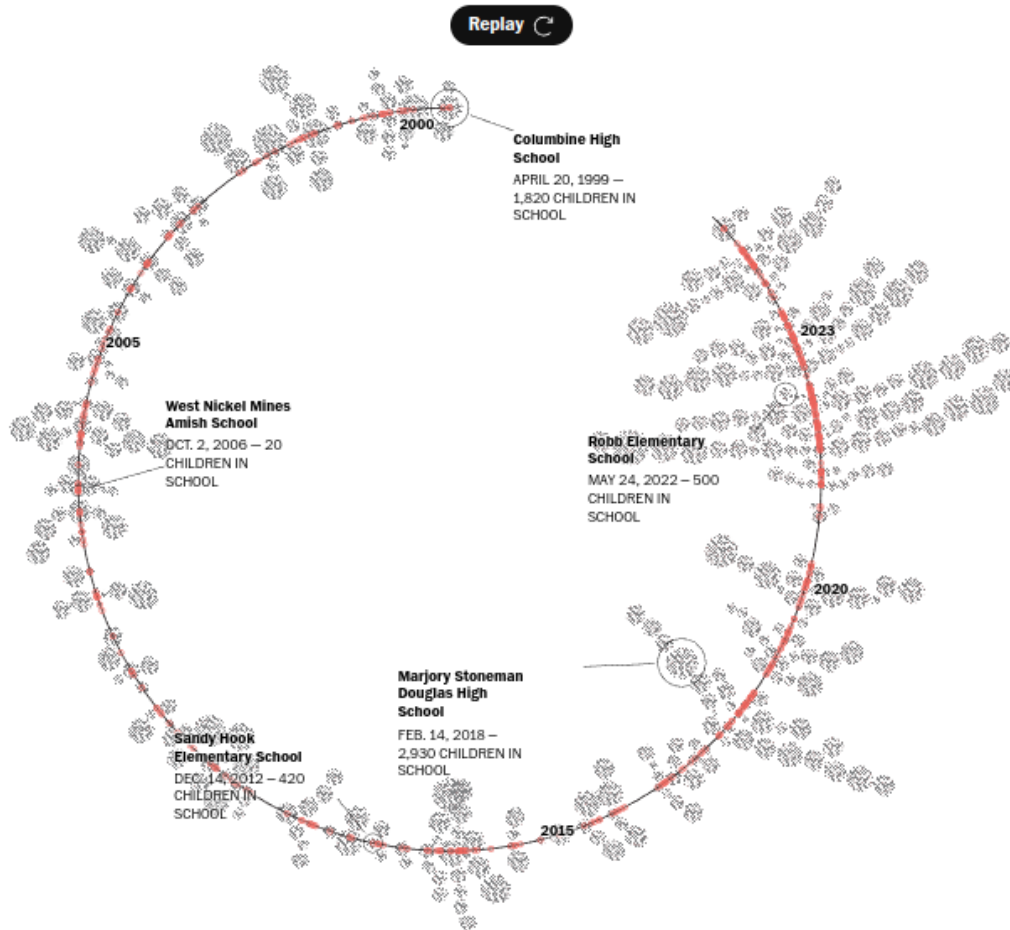


Figure 1: Washington Post's School Shooting Database Visualization

Source: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/interactive/school-shootings-database/>