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Arming Teachers

Between 2010 and May of 2014, there have been at least 94 school shootings in the United States. Shootings have predated that year, but the number of shootings that have happened in this day and age is horrifying. In the age of logic, reasoning and technology, it is frightening to note that school shootings range from colleges down to Elementary schools. Students and teachers are all helpless to the event of an attack, and many have lost their lives to these shootings. Across America, we have become quickly aware of these events and are stricken with grief over the fact that somebody could pull a gun on a room full of helpless people. Many family members still grieve the loss of friends, family and children, and expenses that come with the deaths and injuries, from medical bills to funeral costs.

So what do we do about these incidents? How do we prevent this from happening? Many arguments have clashed on what should be done about these shootings. There has been a rise of solutions offered, such as: police officials for the campus or higher security. Everybody disagrees on what exactly *should* be done about this issue, as many solutions present promises of protection and consequences. Some of these solutions come into question over negating a shooter's intentions and whether they are worth the consequences. One option has presented itself with as much support as it has gotten opposition.

What if we licensed teachers to carry concealed weapons, training them to be ready for an incident such as a shooter on campus. Teachers would be licensed to carry a weapon, to fire that weapon, and would be the first responder to a shooting. This idea arose out of the need for protection for both teachers and students in a devastating event such as a shooting. As contradictory as it is, it has spawned out of the arguments against some of the other solutions that have been proposed. Nevertheless, it presents an interesting question. Should we put guns in the hands of our teachers and what would the effects of this be?

While many have reacted with moral outrage at the mention of putting armed civilians in the classroom, there has shown to be some weight in the prospect of this option. Schools are often the target of these shooters because they are looking for easy targets with no line of defense. We have to find some solution that will protect the schools, where students are supposed to be worried about grades, not a psychopath's intent to kill. Because the shootings vary from kids to teens to adults in college, the research and arguments presented are limited to Pre-K to twelfth grade.

81.5 million students are enrolled in the education system in the US. This is where people come to receive an education, not to fend for their lives. Schools are supposed to be a safe place, a sanctuary, a home away from home and for some even a place safer than home. But incidents occur where students are left in a state of terror, where they are in fear for their lives and some even lose them due to shooting. 59 percent of students that fall victim to these massacres are between the ages of 10 to 19. These are mere adolescents; the last thing they should have to worry about is having an intruder come on campus and open fire. There have been 387 school shootings since 1992, that's 482 innocent students that did not graduate and more importantly are no longer with us, because of one individual's choice. If it is not possible to change or find the

gunman before a school shooting happens, it only makes sense to prevent a future massacre. This is not completely preventable but taking action against these brutalities by arming our teachers is a way to instill a sense of peace to the students and fear towards potential shooters. We should not wait for another Sandy Hook tragedy to take action.

School shootings happen more frequently than we are made aware of, because not all school shootings receive as much social media attention as others. In the case of a school shooting, most schools are not well prepared so it would only make sense to train teachers to be first responders as well. The nearest police station in rural areas can be 15-20 minutes away; in a shooting situation those initial minutes are crucial. Every second can be the difference between life and death of the school's staff and children. However, if teachers were armed and properly trained on how to use a weapon they can be the first line of defense against armed threats on a school campus. To properly train them, participants need to commit to hitting the firing range for a minimum of 100 rounds per month. This would keep the teachers' skills sharp and accurate. So if it was ever need they could respond to an attacker on campus they can do so with confidence and not have to worry about missing and either hitting an innocent bystander or missing their chance to stop the shooter. Jonesboro is one of about 70 districts to arm their staff members since Sandy Hook. This year, the Legislature encouraged more school districts to do the same. Passing this legislation will allow districts to designate staff as "school marshals," an entirely new class of law enforcement. If someone walked into the school with a gun they would at least have a fighting chance of stopping them from harming students and staff, instead of hopelessly waiting and/or hiding until the police show up.

If criminals knew that all teachers had a gun, they would think twice before attempting a crime against a school. The last thing on a child's mind every morning before going to school

should not be if they are going to be safe that day. Parents put trust in the teachers everyday when taking their children to school, with that being said parents should trust teachers with defending their children's lives. Most teachers have a strong protective instinct. Teachers have heroically done what little they can to protect their students and usually become a name to soon be forgotten on the news. Plus, with the training that the teachers would undergo, parents should feel peace of mind that the teacher would take the right steps in the case of a school shooting. Of course, there would be a more rigorous background checks and psychological checks on the teachers test for any unusual behavior that might make the parents want to take the gun carrying privilege away from those teachers. It is because we trust teachers to take care of their students during school hours, to protect and guide them while they are at the educational facilities, that we should be able to rely on them to defend the next generation.

While arming teachers with weapons is an option, is a potentially dangerous one. When you begin arming teachers at school, you fundamentally over look the real problem behind all of the mass shootings. No matter the situation or the type of security is in place, if someone has a strong enough desire to hurt others they would do it. Despite the power of an army, the prospect of war is always there, so arming teachers is really no different. It all boils down to a rush of judgment in the wake of a horrific accident, and a misunderstanding of why that accident occurred in the first place.

When you bring guns into the classroom, the whole dynamic changes, and it turns a safe learning environment into a potentially hazardous and stressful environment. At the end of the day, teachers are there to teach; and no matter how well anyone is trained with a firearm accidents happen. There are 14 thousand to 19 thousand accidental shootings reported every year

in the US, with about 600 of those shootings causing fatalities. Instead of making the school a safer environment this makes the classroom much more prone to severe accidents.

When you have a school full of guns, it comes into question as to where all these guns are going to be stored? Is there going to be more security at the school? What happens if a student gets access to the guns? These are not questions that we should be asking if we are looking to make schools safer. At the end of it all, you still overlook the main problem: Why are these mass shootings happening in the first place.

When a shooting happens, the first thing people think about are the solutions that could have solved this incident before it happened. As soon as the initial shock of the shooting calms down, no one seems to talk about any good long term solution. Look at the long term solutions, we take into consideration why these shootings occur in the first place. The people who commit these horrendous acts are all mentally ill, and a lot of times they just wanted to be heard, they act out as a way to force people to listen to their pain. When you look at the problem for what it is and not for its surface value you can really begin to figure out the proper solution for everyone. We cannot just care about this problem only when it occurs, we need to look at it long after and just figure out what can be done to stop these acts from happening in the future. The answer is not prepare ourselves with guns, waiting for the next shooting to occur.

The safety of children and staff is the primary concern and arming a teacher would only be a valid idea because they are the first responders. It is important to not only take the teachers into consideration but the students as well. Students with a curiosity streak, regardless of the age, may attempt to investigate the gun, or even worse try to handle it. Many students play with toy guns, water guns, and also see guns in video games. All of this can cause children to act out of curiosity and try to seek out interaction with the firearm itself.

Furthermore, guns are always viewed in a negative way which can also cause curiosity. This could develop fear in the classroom, forming a stressful environment. Many students are already scared of teachers and putting a gun in the hands of teachers would increase fear towards said teachers. There are some teachers that are viewed by their students as mentally inept, while highly intelligent they can not be trusted with a weapon. Whether truly mentally ill or not, these are the last people students want to see carrying a weapon to school. This can lead to students not attending class or being extremely scared leading them to focus more on what the teacher will be doing with the gun instead of paying attention to the class material. Students do not know the teacher at a personal level, so they do not know what the teacher is capable of doing with the right weapon placed in hand.

In many previous school shootings the attacker did not show signs that they were capable of such a horrible crime, nor did they have a criminal background. Many of the attacks have occurred randomly. Teacher patience and criminal background is also very important to think about when it comes to this issue. There are teachers who are impatient and might use the gun as a threat. In the past teachers have thrown objects at students out of impatience, irritation and anger. So it is not unthinkable that a teacher might use a gun as a threat.

There are many other alternatives that can be considered when discussing this topic. Guns are dangerous and as stated before there is a lot of opposition to arming teachers. With this being such a controversial topic coming to a common ground and agreeing on any weapon can be difficult. Other options to arming teachers with firearms could be arming them with tasers, baseball bats, or pepper spray. These would all be less costly and less lethal than arming teachers with guns while still providing added security. As a whole, the best alternative would be to have better lockdown systems and screening processes combined with better mental health services to

stop these horrible incidents before they happen. Many schools country wide are gated with high fences and every person entering the school would need to go through a metal detector to enter campus. This is effective, however, these systems are very costly.

Overall, having a gun on a campus is not the best solution. If it would be the best solution it would have been done already. Many students do not agree with the option of arming their teachers because they would not feel safe within that environment. A gun on campus would be a potential danger to the students and staff. Allowing guns on school would create a mindset of fear and would have the potential of bringing violence into the educational setting.

This issue is extremely controversial, but the most important thing that we need to remember is that both sides of this topic are looking for what is in the best interest of teachers and students. The points that have been brought up on both sides of this issue are important in breaking down the complicated argument of arming school teachers.

Arming teachers could have benefits but could also have negative outcomes, which is why we need to assess the consequences of both realities. The benefits would be that teachers are the first responders when an intruder is on campus and having an armed staff would altogether deter people from entering campus. The potential negative risks would be that it would change the environment of a classroom, instill fear in students and put teachers in charge of harming an intruder. Teachers being armed is a reality that lawmakers are already starting to face “in several states including Minnesota, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Michigan, Mississippi, South Carolina, Oregon and Virginia [lawmakers] have proposed or introduced legislation that would permit teachers with concealed carry permits to voluntarily bring their weapons onto school grounds.” and there are some schools already granting people this privilege. Student and staff safety is

attainable with the many alternatives presented and are better solutions to this massively devastating problem.