

# The financial and psychological toll of arming teachers



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In the last decade, school shootings have become a common occurrence across the nation. Affected districts and the United States government concerned by the threat of similar attacks have proposed ways of preventing more innocent lives from being taken. Currently, the laws regarding the purchase and access to certain guns and their accessories are being altered. For example, the state of Florida has outlawed buying bump stocks that allow semi automatic rifles to rapidly reload and fire. Other than reforming gun control laws, an idea that some schools are implementing is to arm their teachers with guns. The debate centers on whether the guns in schools are putting students at risk or protecting their lives. Besides the prevalent safety concerns, supplying guns and training for the nation's educators could take a toll on many districts' finances and mental health.

Often, people's stances on this topic are based on opinionated comments; however, the actual cash amount of the teachers' guns and training is difficult to argue. As reported by Rajan et. al, (2018) a theoretical study shows the \$19 to \$22 billion yearly cost of stationing one law enforcement officer per elementary and high school in America. The study's results align with the President's proposal that 20 percent of teachers should own guns. The price of arming teachers would take up a similar percentage of the \$78.9 billion federal school funding budget (p. 861). The cost of arming hundreds of thousands of teachers is likely to require a large portion of funds that most schools do not have to spare. Not to mention the cost of the training each individual staff member must undergo after being chosen to possess a handgun. However, there are exceptions that include districts enrolling

thousands of students versus schools having less than a hundred kids in each graduating class.

One school that is not confined to a low budget in arming their teachers is in Sidney, Ohio. According to Green (2018), Sidney City Schools utilize \$36 million for spending money that make the fees of close to \$300, 000 for safety reinforcements such as guns, expendable. This number does not include the annual \$100, 000 that goes towards liability insurances (p. 7). The district is one of few that has the income to spend millions of dollars a year. It also means that the costs of arming teachers will vary across the nation depending on the size of the school. The question is then, where the money will come from if small communities cannot pay for the expensive handguns and requirements needed to ensure safety. Examples of a few protocols at the school in Ohio are described as, “ Semiautomatic Glock handguns with extra magazines...dozens of biometric safes” and “ only accessible to a designated staff member whose fingerprint can open the box” (Green, 2018, p. 1). The quality of safety measures is more important than the number of weapons a school owns. Even though a school may have a significantly lower student body and staff, they still need to contribute a sizable portion of funding in order to follow proper gun storage and handling procedures. Though the aspect of money and spending is valid, the psychological state of both teachers and students should be taken into consideration when discussing guns in schools.

The loss of feeling safe in a public learning environment can negatively affect one’s mental health. Rajan et al., (2018) examines the adverse health effects the students may experience by stating, “ We also know that the <https://assignbuster.com/the-financial-and-psychological-toll-of-arming-teachers/>

anticipation of violence can lead to increased anxiety, fear, and depression... arming teachers in all likelihood, would heighten levels of anxiety and negatively affect a school's climate" (p. 861). Schools would become fortresses that could cause there to be a sense of constant, high alert. The knowledge of a gun being present in a classroom may worry kids that it will accidentally go off and seriously injure them. The fact that guns are portrayed as a method protection in a place known as a haven is a bit disheartening. Furthermore, the psychological changes felt by students is as Rajan (2018) reports, " Heightened policing and intrusive security efforts within public school spaces decrease a student's sense of safety; this finding has been reinforced by recent work" (p. 860). Students with or without anxiety disorders may always feel on edge at school. Rules and regulations can be constantly changed or altered by district officials, but the minds of their children are not so easily manipulated. As for teachers, the weight of responsibility and dread of harming others out of protection can become too much to handle.

A teacher's role was once to prepare and uplift their students. Now the establishment of lethal weapons in classrooms is setting an expectation for the staff to fight an attacker that is often one of their students. Some staffs' opinions can be summed up as, "' I think as educators were trained to nurture kids and foster kids, and our first instinct is to not shoot or harm them' he said. ' What we need is more caring adults in these kids' lives, not more guns'" (Green, 2018, p. 2). The testimony allows one to see the situation from an actual teacher's point of view. Often the politicians creating the laws or policies have never taught a classroom of children a day in their

lives. Teachers may struggle with the stress of having to hurt an attacker that could have once sat in their class. Another worry teachers may have is if their guns happens to go off accidentally. The man or woman would be held responsible and face legal consequences. The quote also reveals that fighting violence with violence is not productive. All students, school staff involved can be affected negatively by the fearful atmosphere. On top of their numerous duties, teachers will be required to prepare themselves through prolonged training and extra courses to handle a gun and defend their classrooms through force. Rajan (2018) evaluates, " The extraordinary number of responsibilities that teachers and schools bear has been pointed out frequently in research related to teacher stress and burnout" (p. 862). Mentally they are affected by the stress of added work and time needed for training. While the possibility of harming one of their students with the weapon that is supposedly one of the only options of protection wears at their nerves.

Arming teachers is at the expense of districts' economics and psychological well-beings. The physical dangers of guns in schools can be easily seen. However, the controversy lies within the question of whether lives of students and staff members are being saved or put in harm's way. After multiple school shootings occurred within a short period of time, states like Washington and Oregon have taken initiative to altering laws. Some changes are to the system and approval time needed to buy a gun online or in a shop. Across America families have lost their loved ones to a school shooter. The definitive answer of how to prevent similar events from happening is still

unknown. Fighting a violent act with another weapon of lethal force does not seem like the proper or moral response to the lives lost.

## Works Cited

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