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DO SCHOOLS' "ACTIVE-SHOOTER" DRILLS PREPARE OR FRIGHTEN?

EVIE BLAD

On "safety days," elementary students in Akron, OH, learn a new vocabulary 1 word: barricade.

School-based police officers tell students as young as kindergartners how 2 to stack chairs and desks against the classroom door to make it harder for "bad guys" to get in. "Make the classroom more like a fort," an officer says in a video of the exercise.

If a teacher asks you to climb out a window, listen to them, the officers 3 instruct. And, in the unlikely event a "bad guy" gets into the classroom, scream and run around to distract him, officers tell students.

For some parents, the idea of such instruction is chilling. Others, though, 4 say it's a sad, but necessary sign of the times.

Children around the country are increasingly receiving similar training as 5 schools adopt more elaborate safety drills in response to concerns about school shootings. That leaves schools with a profound challenge: how to prepare young students for the worst, without provoking anxiety or fear.

"That's the fine balance," said Dan Rambler, the Akron school district's 6 director of student services and safety. "We're not trying to panic people." A growing number of districts around the country have replaced or supplemented traditional lockdown drills—which teach students to quietly hide in their classrooms in the event of a school shooting—with multi-option response drills, which teach them a variety of ways to respond and escape.

Most controversially, the drills teach young students how to "counter" a 7 shooter by running in zig-zag patterns, throwing objects, and screaming to make it difficult for a gunman to focus and aim.

Akron uses a protocol called ALICE (Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, 8 Evacuate). It was developed by former police officer Greg Crane and his wife, Lisa Crane, a former school principal, after the 1999 shootings at Colorado's Columbine High School.

It's grown more popular following the 2012 shootings at Sandy Hook Ele- 9 mentary School in Newtown, CT. About 4,000 school districts and 3,500 police departments have ALICE-trained personnel.

School safety consultant Kenneth Trump, who regularly writes about 10 ALICE training, says it's not supported by evidence and "preys on the emotions of today's active shooter frenzy that is spreading across the nation." Trump and other critics say schools shouldn't train young children in the ALICE response when school shootings, typically the focus of such drills, are statistically rare.

But fires are also rare, Rambler said, and that doesn't stop schools from 11 conducting regular fire drills.

Greg Crane, ALICE's creator, says schools put children in danger if they 12 teach them to be "static targets."

Parents "don't have any problem discussing an abduction and giving chil- 13 dren quite aggressive tactics in response," Crane said. "What do we tell kids in stranger danger? Anything but go with the guy. Bite, kick, yell. Anything but go sit in the corner and be quiet."

Growing Use of Drills

Discussions over security are often sparked by media coverage of shootings. 14 Recently, a student at a Washington state high school shot and killed a classmate and injured three others before he was subdued by a janitor.

Federal data show a growing use of school-shooter drills, though it 15 doesn't distinguish between lockdown drills and responses like ALICE. In the

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2013-14 school year, 70 percent of public schools drilled students on how to respond to a school shooting, including 71 percent of elementary schools, according to the most recent data available. In 2003-4, 47 percent of schools involved students in shooter drills.

A 2013 federal report, created in 16 response to Sandy Hook, outlined a safety response that called on school staff to "consider trying to disrupt or incapacitate the shooter by using aggressive force and items in their environment, such as fire extinguishers, and chairs. It didn't advocate involving students.

That report, released by the U.S. Department of Education on behalf of a 17 group of federal agencies, drew concern from some school safety consultants who said such a "run, hide, fight" approach is unproven by research and may even be dangerous in the event of an actual shooting.

But it also inspired states and districts to update safety plans, leading 18 many to adopt ALICE and similar training. A subsequent report by a task force convened by Ohio's attorney general, for example, recommended that schools train students and staff that, if a shooter enters a classroom, they try to interfere with his shooting accuracy by throwing books, computers, and phones. They may also need to subdue the intruder, the report said.

In Akron, parents can opt their children out of the training, though few 19 do. Elementary students are told briefly about countering techniques, but the focus of their discussions is on following teachers' directions in unpredictable situations. In middle school, training is "a little more complete," sometimes including foam props that students throw at school police officers as practice.

Countering an intruder "is literally the last resort," Rambler said. "That is, 20 'Do whatever you have to to stay alive.' It's not, 'Go find the gunman and throw something at them.'"

Planning a Response

Greg Crane said schools decide how detailed they want to be in their hypothetical discussions of violence, but most involve students in some level of training.

The Cranes worked with a children's author to publish a book called *I'm Not Scared . . . I'm Prepared!* that many schools use to train younger students. But some parents have been concerned about what some districts teach in ALICE drills, particularly when it comes to the counterstep.

In 2015, an Alabama middle school made headlines when its principal asked students to keep canned goods in their desks to hurl at attackers. At the time, ALICE co-founder Lisa Crane said the use of canned goods is not something ALICE trainers would advocate, but it's also not something they would discourage.

In some districts, parents have started petitions or turned out to school board meetings in opposition to active-shooter drills, saying they don't want to expose their young children to such discussions of violence.

"My daughter is 8 years old and she reads the newspaper and she gets nervous about stories about murders and other things happening in the neighborhood, so I'm very concerned about what impact it will have on her to be told that there's a potential that someone might walk through the door and shoot her classroom," a father said at a public meeting after the Anchorage district announced ALICE training plans last year.

At the National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO) conference in Washington in July, Officer Ingrid Herriott told school-based police officers and safety directors how she customized ALICE training for elementary, middle, and high school students when she was a school resource officer at Southwest Allen County Schools in Fort Wayne, IN.

She showed a video she said schools could use to explain ALICE to elementary school children. In it, a school officer explains "stranger danger" to a plush dog named Safety Pup. Police officers are in uniforms, teachers have lanyards and name tags, and strangers are other adults students don't recognize, the video says. The officer then explains ALICE, advising students to listen to their teacher for directions.

Middle school students quickly learn to barricade doors with desks, Herriott said. She walked middle school students through drills by showing videos produced by the district's high school students using fake guns to act out school intruder scenarios. In one such video, a student in a library pretends to hit the gunman over the head with a chair.

At that age, the idea of a shooting "isn't something that's above and beyond what they are seeing in the media and the video games they are playing," Herriot said. High school students were given internet surveys after training to learn about concerns, and had principals make follow-up videos to respond to those concerns.

NASRO worked with the National Association of School Psychologists to address concerns about the psychological effects of safety drills. Recom-

mendations call for plans that are as sensitive to local and regional concerns, like wildfires and earthquakes, as they are to statistically less probable events, like shootings.

Steve Brock, a professor of school psychology at California State University, Sacramento, helped draft that guidance. He said there's not enough research to support ALICE and similar training in schools.

Minimizing Student Anxiety

The most important thing a teacher can do in a shooting situation is lock the classroom door, Brock said, and it's not necessary to "unnecessarily frighten" students by walking them through more elaborate hypothetical scenarios.

"When it comes to these kinds of activities, schools need to proceed cautiously," he said.

Brock advocates for lockdown drills, which he calls "tried and true" for a variety of crises, ranging from intruders to an intoxicated parent. Such drills have been shown to lessen student anxiety. Brock recommends schools train young students to pretend there's a strange dog in the hallway that they are trying to stay safe from, rather than talking about "bad guys" or shootings.

But some parents and teachers say responses like ALICE ease their fears that children would be "sitting ducks" in a shooting situation.

After Matt Holland, a third-grade teacher in Alexandria, VA, learned about ALICE in his own staff training this summer, he called his 7-year-old daughter's school in a neighboring district to ask leaders to transition away from a lockdown approach.

"While, yes, statistically speaking, the chances [of a shooting] are very slim," Holland said, "I don't want, heaven forbid, something to happen to my students or my daughter and to say, 'There was a small chance it would happen, and it happened. And no one ever planned for it.'"

⊕ AT ISSUE: SOURCES FOR DEVELOPING AN ETHICAL ARGUMENT

1. Blad begins her essay by describing an active-shooter instruction session. Is this an effective opening strategy? Why or why not? What other strategy should Blad have used?
2. In paragraph 10, Blad refers to Kenneth Trump, who says that ALICE training is not supported by any evidence that it works. In paragraph 17, a group of school-safety consultants say that ALICE training was "unproven by research and may even be dangerous in the event of an actual shooting." Does Blad adequately address these criticisms? Explain.

3. What is the difference between a “lockdown drill” and ALICE training? Which do you think would be more effective when confronting an active shooter?
4. Why do some parents oppose active-shooter drills? Do you agree or disagree with them? In what sense do active shooter drills present these parents with an ethical dilemma?
5. In her conclusion, Blad quotes Matt Holland, a third-grade teacher, who acknowledges that “chances [of a shooting] are very slim” (para. 37). Does this weaken the argument in favor of active shooter drills? Explain.
6. Throughout her essay, Blad attempts to answer the question she asks in her title. Does she succeed? If not, why not?

This article is from the October 11, 2007, issue of *National Review*.



THERE'S A REASON THEY CHOOSE SCHOOLS

TIMOTHY WHEELER

Wednesday's shooting at yet another school has a better outcome than most in recent memory. No one died at Cleveland's Success Tech Academy except the perpetrator. The two students and two teachers he shot are in stable condition at Cleveland hospitals.

What is depressingly similar to the mass murders at Virginia Tech and Nickel Mines, Pennsylvania, and too many others was the killer's choice of venue—that steadfastly gun-free zone, the school campus. Although murderer Seung-Hui Cho at Virginia Tech and Asa Coon, the Cleveland shooter, were both students reported to have school-related grudges, other school killers have proved to be simply taking advantage of the lack of effective security at schools. The Bailey, Colorado, multiple rapes and murder of September 2006, the Nickel Mines massacre of October 2006, and Buford Furrow's murderous August 1999 invasion of a Los Angeles Jewish day-care center were all committed by adults. They had no connection to the schools other than being drawn to the soft target a school offers such psychopaths.

This latest shooting comes only a few weeks after the American Medical Association released a theme issue of its journal *Disaster Medicine and Public Health Preparedness*. This issue is dedicated to analyzing the April 2007 Virginia Tech shootings, in which 32 people were murdered. The authors are university officials, trauma surgeons, and legal analysts who pore over the details of the incident, looking for "warning signs" and "risk factors" for violence. They rehash all the tired rhetoric of bureaucrats and public-health wonks, including the public-health mantra of the 1990s that guns are the root cause of violence.

Sheldon Greenberg, a dean at Johns Hopkins, offers this gem: "Reinforce a 'no weapons' policy and, when violated, enforce it quickly, to include expulsion. Parents should be made aware of the policy. *Officials should dispel the politically driven notion that armed students could eliminate an active shooter*" (emphasis added). Greenberg apparently isn't aware that at the Appalachian School of Law in 2002 another homicidal Virginia student was stopped from shooting more of his classmates when another student held him at gunpoint. The Pearl High School murderer Luke Woodham was stopped cold when vice principal Joel Myrick got his Colt .45 handgun out of his truck and pointed it at the young killer.

Virginia Tech's 2005 no-guns-on-campus policy was an abject failure at deterring Cho Seung-Hui. Greenberg's audacity in ignoring the obvious is typical of arrogant school officials. What the AMA journal authors studiously

avoid are on one hand the repeated failures of such feel-good steps as no-gun policies, and on the other hand the demonstrated success of armed first responders. These responders would be the students themselves, such as the trained and licensed law student, or their similarly qualified teachers.

In Cleveland this week and at Virginia Tech the shooters took time to walk the halls, searching out victims in several rooms, and then shooting them. Virginia Chief Medical Examiner Marcella Fierro describes the locations of the dead in Virginia Tech's Norris Hall. Dead victims were found in groups ranging from 1 to 13, scattered throughout 4 rooms and a stairwell. If any one of the victims had, like the Appalachian School of Law student, used armed force to stop Cho, lives could have been saved.

The people of Virginia actually had a chance to implement such a plan last year. House Bill 1572 was introduced in the legislature to extend the state's concealed-carry provisions to college campuses. But the bill died in committee, opposed by the usual naysayers, including the Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police and the university itself. Virginia Tech spokesman Larry Hincker was quoted in the *Roanoke Times* as saying, "I'm sure the university community is appreciative of the General Assembly's actions because this will help parents, students, faculty, and visitors feel safe on our campus."

It is encouraging that college students themselves have a much better grasp on reality than their politically correct elders. During the week of October 22–26 Students for Concealed Carry on Campus will stage a nationwide "empty holster" demonstration (peaceful, of course) in support of their cause.

School officials typically base violence-prevention policies on irrational fears more than real-world analysis of what works. But which is more horrible, the massacre that timid bureaucrats fear might happen when a few good guys (and gals) carry guns on campus, or the one that actually did happen despite Virginia Tech's progressive violence-prevention policy? Can there really be any more debate?

AMA journal editor James J. James, M.D., offers up this nostrum:

We must meaningfully embrace all of the varied disciplines contributing to preparedness and response and be more willing to be guided and informed by the full spectrum of research methodologies, including not only the rigid application of the traditional scientific method and epidemiological and social science applications but also the incorporation of observational/empirical findings, as necessary, in the absence of more objective data.

Got that?

I prefer the remedy prescribed by self-defense guru Massad Ayoob. When good people find themselves in what he calls "the dark place," confronted by

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no-guns-on-campus
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failure."**

the imminent terror of a gun-wielding homicidal maniac, the picture becomes clear. Policies won't help. Another federal gun law won't help. The only solution is a prepared and brave defender with the proper lifesaving tool—a gun.

⊕ AT ISSUE: SOURCES FOR DEVELOPING AN ETHICAL ARGUMENT

1. According to Wheeler, what is "depressingly similar" about the mass murders committed on campuses (para. 2)?
2. What is Wheeler's attitude toward those who said that "guns are the root cause of violence" (3)? How can you tell?
3. Why, according to Wheeler, do college administrators and bureaucrats continue to ignore the answer to the problem of violence on campus? How does he refute their objections?
4. Do you find Wheeler's argument in support of his thesis convincing? What, if anything, do you think he could have added to strengthen his argument?
5. How does Wheeler's language reveal his attitude toward his subject? (For example, consider his use of "gem" in paragraph 4 and "politically correct" in paragraph 8.) Can you give other examples of language that conveys his point of view?
6. How do you think Wheeler would respond to the ideas in "Warning Signs: How You Can Help Prevent Campus Violence" (p. 554)? Which suggestions do you think he would support? Which would he be likely to oppose? Explain.

This piece was published in *The Nation* on August 29, 2016.



THE FEAR INDUSTRY GOES BACK TO SCHOOL

SASHA ABRAMSKY

“Security was the number-one factor for me in choosing a school,” explained 1
one of the mothers I met late last winter at a Montessori preschool in an
affluent suburb of Salt Lake City. A quality-control expert at a dietary-
supplement company, the woman said she vividly remembers the jolt of horror
she felt when she first learned of the Columbine massacre in 1999. So when the
time came to send her child to preschool, she selected one that markets itself
not only as creative, caring, and nurturing, but also as particularly security-
conscious.

To get the front door of the school to open, visitors had to be positively 2
ID'd by a fingerprint-recognition system. In the foyer, a bank of monitors
showed a live feed of the activity in every classroom. After drop-off, many par-
ents would spend 15 minutes to half an hour staring at the screens, making
sure their children were being treated well by their teachers and classmates.
Many of the moms and dads had requested internet access to the images, but
the school had balked, fearing that online sexual predators would be able to
hack into the video stream. All of the classroom doors had state-of-the-art
lockdown features, and all of the teachers had access to long-distance bee
spray—which, in the case of an emergency, they were instructed to fi re off
at the eyes of intruders. The playground was surrounded by a high concrete
wall, which crimped the kids' views of the majestic Wasatch Mountains. The
imposing front walls, facing out onto a busy road, were similarly designed to
stop predators from peering into the classrooms.

“I fear a gunman walking into my child's school and gunning up the place,” 3
the mother continued. (I have withheld her name, and that of the school, upon
request.) “And I fear someone walking onto the playground and swiping a kid.
And I fear an employee of the school damaging my child. These things happen
more commonly than people expect.”

Actually, they don't. Despite the excruciating angst suffered by this woman 4
and so many other parents, school violence is a rarity in America. According
to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 34 children in the
United States were murdered while in school during the 1992–93 school year.
From 2008 to 2013, the most recent years for which the NCES provides data,
the average annual figure was 19. In recent decades, the numbers have waxed
and waned, hitting 34 again in 1997–98 and going as low as 11 in 2010–11.
Generally, the trend has been downward.

If one adds the deaths of teachers and other staff, as well as suicides by 5
students during the school day, the numbers go up, of course. In the 20-year
period covered by the NCES data, 2006–7 was the deadliest, with 63 violent

deaths occurring in America's schools. That is unquestionably 63 too many violent deaths, and for the families directly affected by the killings, it represents unfathomable—and inextinguishable—anguish.

But it isn't quite the national epidemic that one might picture based on the vast media coverage these killings receive. In fact, far more children and young adults are killed on the impoverished streets of America's large cities every year. By several orders of magnitude, far more kids die each year in car crashes or drowning accidents—or from asthma. And far more young lives are lost to a host of other diseases closely correlated with poverty.

There are approximately 55 million K-12 students in America and roughly 3.5 million adults employed as teachers. There are, in addition, millions of support staff—janitors, nurses, cooks, after-school-program providers, and so on. Even in the deadliest years, the chance of a student or adult being killed at school is roughly one in a million. By contrast, roughly five out of every 100,000 American residents are murdered each year. Extrapolating from this, schools are somewhere in the region of 50 times safer than society overall.

And yet you'd never know that from the level of fear that exists around schools—or from the vast amount of money we spend attempting to make them more secure. The research company IHS Technology recently estimated that schools and universities spent about \$768 million on security measures in 2014—a sum that it predicted would rise to roughly \$907 million for 2016. That's an awful lot of money to spend at a time when state and local budget cuts are limiting educational opportunities for students across the country.

The spike in spending on school security began in the mid-1990s, when the Clinton administration, seeking to co-opt the prevailing tough-on-crime, zero-tolerance message, pushed an array of measures that led to the hiring of several thousand new “school resource officers.” Thousands more police officers were funded by state and city grants, making the presence of armed police a daily reality in schools around the country. At the same time, one school after another, especially in inner cities, brought in airport-style metal detectors and introduced “clear bag” policies so that school officials could easily check everything students brought into the building.

As schools came to resemble prisons—which, perhaps not coincidentally, were also expanding during these years—an increasing number of students ended up being arrested on school grounds. In cities like Stockton, California, where even nonpolice “resource officers” are granted arrest powers, thousands of kids have acquired criminal records for minor offenses. Students in these districts are arrested at rates far higher than those reported in places where resource officers aren't given such powers. The construction of this “school-to-prison pipeline” has disproportionately affected minority students—who, in turn, face harsher penalties once they come into contact with the criminal-justice system. Sometimes the confrontations with security officers can be horrendous. Last October, for example, students in a South Carolina

school filmed an officer violently dumping a teenage girl out of her chair and dragging her across the floor before arresting her—all because she used her cell phone during math class.

In recent years, the school-security industry has expanded to include high-tech surveillance among its offerings. The school district in Las Vegas has been installing surveillance cameras in schools since 2000, and they are now standard in new schools. All told, according to a 2014 article in the *Las Vegas Sun*, more than 12,000 surveillance cameras are recording in Sin City's schools, complementing the hundreds of cameras in school buses and on major thoroughfares, and the tens of thousands of cameras in the city's giant casinos. The *Sun* didn't report on how much this system cost, but a much smaller project at St. Mary's High School in St. Louis reportedly cost the school \$500 a month to lease two cameras, or \$15,000 to buy them outright.

Newark Memorial High School, in the San Francisco Bay Area, has embedded ShotSpotter technology, an advanced sound-recognition sensor system deployed by police departments in many urban neighborhoods to identify when and where gunshots are occurring. Although the school hasn't had to pay ShotSpotter for the technology—the company views it as a testing ground for how such a system could be used in a school setting—police departments around the country pay anywhere from \$65,000 to \$90,000 per year for each square mile covered by the sensors.

And then there's the Indianapolis suburb of Shelbyville, where school superintendent Paula Maurer recently became so worried about the possibility of a shooting that she installed a \$400,000 security system in the town's high school. The entire campus, located in open countryside just outside of town, is now saturated with cameras linked into the nearest police station. Every teacher wears a panic button around his or her neck, and pressing it sends the entire campus into instant lockdown. For good measure, police officers watching from miles away can set off blinding smoke cannons and ear-splitting sirens at a moment's notice.

Much as anticrime advocates convinced government agencies in the 1990s and 2000s to fund an increasing array of punitive programs, today school-security companies and trade associations are lobbying legislators in several states to change building codes so that schools will be mandated to spend more on their security systems. If they get their way, the Shelbyville experiment could well be a harbinger of things to come.

“Lately, America's school-security fetish has reached a whole new level of bizarre.”

Lately, America's school-security fetish has reached a whole new level of bizarre. In the wake of the December 2012 Sandy Hook massacre in Newtown, Connecticut, one company after another has rushed to take advantage of the opportunities presented by the epidemic of fear that emerged in response to school violence, and to exploit the emotional vulnerabilities of terrified

parents. As a result, a huge number of utterly inane products have entered the market.

School-security specialist Kenneth Trump, longtime president of 16 the Cleveland-based National School Safety and Security Services, likens the surge of “overnight experts, gadgets, and gurus who have popped up out of the blue” to a feeding frenzy. “Every time we have a high-profile shooting, we see another business or product, well intended but not well thought out,” he says. After the Columbine massacre, Trump recalls, there was a “fairly reasonable conversation” about security. By contrast, in the years since the slaughter at Sandy Hook, “it’s been the worst I’ve seen in 30-plus years, in terms of people responding emotionally and businesses preying on the emotions of people who are afraid.”

Take, for example, Bullet Blockers, a company working out of Lowell, 17 Massachusetts, that manufactures bulletproof backpacks for elementary-school children. The ones for young girls come in raspberry pink or red plaid; the ones for boys come in red, black, navy blue, and more. The company also markets bulletproof jackets, bulletproof iPad cases, and bulletproof whiteboards for use in classrooms. It even sells a “survival pack and safety kit,” complete with fire starters, first-aid guides, cold compresses, and other items that would allow a child to survive a prolonged school lockdown.

Bullet Blockers CEO Ed Burke won’t divulge how many items his com- 18 pany has sold, but he does say that “since the Paris attacks [of November 13, 2015], our business has grown 80 percent and continues to grow.” Have his products actually saved lives? “Thank God, none as yet,” he answers—meaning that none of his products have thus far been used to foil an attacker in a school shooting. But “they’ve been tested randomly, to test ballistic capabilities.”

None of Burke’s clients would agree to talk for this article, but Burke 19 does aver that his company sold products to “a grandmother who lives in Sandy Hook, who got her grandchildren a couple of backpacks.” He adds, “I got a phone call from a gentleman in California whose wife was involved in the massacre in San Bernardino. She was in the building. He wanted to get her a backpack.” Burke also cited a family that ordered a man’s farm coat, a woman’s leather coat, a child’s nylon jacket, and three backpacks, all bulletproof as well.

In Hauppauge, New York, Derek Peterson runs a tech start-up called 20 Digital Fly, which enables school officials to monitor all social-media postings within a radius chosen by the school. The intent, which would be eerily familiar to government spy agencies the world over, is to drill down into communications used near schools as a way to identify potential shooters, bombers, bullies, or would-be suicides. The postings of everyone within that catchment area—whether they’re students, local residents, or simply people passing through—are monitored. “My software will identify it,” Peterson enthuses, seemingly oblivious of (or indifferent to) the extraordinary

privacy implications of his work. “The school administrator will get emails. At that point, every school has a different policy—they get the parents, the police involved. I provide you with a hammer: Here’s the tools to build the house.”

Peterson claims that his system is being used in more than 50 schools²¹ around the country, as well as some in Ireland and South Africa. His ambitions are large. “It could go global,” he says. “We’re hoping it does. I’m a serial entrepreneur; this is right in my sweet spot. How do you put a price on protecting little ones? Unfortunately, we live in a crazy world where kids are targeted. So any way we can protect children, I’m all for it.”

Much like Burke, Peterson acknowledges that he has no real way of know-²² ing if Digital Fly is working—although he does claim that it helped prevent two suicides in New York City schools. But since he charges only \$1.50 to \$2.75 per student, Peterson hopes that schools will decide it’s worth adding to their tool kit just on the off chance it works. He tells parents at PTA meetings that his service costs the equivalent of one can of soda per year for each kid, and then adds a spiel about how, if even one bloody nose is avoided, it will be money well spent. “Right now, there are 50 million K–12 matriculating students just in the U.S.,” Peterson says as he ponders his company’s future. “The sky is the limit.”

Many experts worry that the new school-security measures can endanger the²³ people they’re supposed to protect. Anti-intruder doors were installed in some schools in Ohio without overrides built in, making it hard for first responders to reach stranded kids in the event of a crisis. There is some anecdotal evidence that lockdown drills injure teachers; they have reputedly resulted in a flurry of workers’-compensation claims across the country. And at the Kaimuki Middle School in Honolulu, a lockdown drill in which a teacher ran through the school wielding a hammer and playing an attacker drew criticism after several young children were traumatized by the sight of their seemingly crazed teacher on a rampage.

The increasing cost of high-tech safety measures has become a concern²⁴ too. At a time when many schools can’t rustle up enough money to keep art and music classes running, and when parents are often asked to purchase such necessities as notebooks, pencils, and even toilet paper, all of this militarization and surveillance represents a scandalous diversion of education funds.

Shelbyville’s \$400,000 security system, for example, could have been used²⁵ to pay the salaries and benefits of roughly eight full-time teachers for a year (the average salary for a teacher in the town is \$43,000). That’s not an insignificant fact in a city that shed five teachers in April 2010 as a way of saving \$250,000 during the dog days of the recession. All told, according to the *Indiana Economic Digest*, Shelbyville schools lost access to over \$1 million that year. Three years later, the school district cut the hours for scores of teaching

aides, bus drivers, and other staff to avoid the cost of covering their health insurance under the terms of the Affordable Care Act.

Ronald Stephens, the executive director of the California-based National School Safety Center, who teaches a graduate course on school-safety issues at Pepperdine University, recalls talking with the superintendent of a school near his home in Oak Park, one of Los Angeles's many affluent suburbs. The superintendent explained that he was under tremendous public pressure to put security fences around the district's schools, at a cost of \$1.6 million. He was resisting it because he believed the schools had bigger needs: The teachers hadn't received a pay raise in five years.

Back at the Montessori school in Utah, I met a father in his mid-40s who bemoaned the fact that kids could no longer roam freely, walking to and from school alone, playing unsupervised outdoors for hours with their friends, as he'd done growing up in the Bay Area. "Times are different now," he explained sadly. "There are more crazy people in the world."

The man, who worked for a large plumbing and air-conditioning company, had a bachelor's degree in criminal-justice studies. Intellectually, he knew the statistics. He knew that violent-crime rates were higher when he was growing up than they are today. So I asked him if he was sure that the environment was less safe for his 17-year-old daughter than it had been for him. "Probably not," he said after a long pause. "It's hard. She is way too sheltered. I'd love to let her spread her wings a little bit more. But we do keep our thumbs on her. There's always the fear of a kidnap, a traffic accident. Turn on the news at night—we watch the news while we eat dinner. The media loves to create a sense of panic. They love bad news."

On one level, he knew that the media were selling him a bill of goods. But he couldn't bring himself to turn away—and the more he watched, the more fearful he became. The man told me that he's had nightmares about mass shootings and kidnappings; his face got beet red with tension even while discussing it.

Unfortunately, this is the sort of circular reasoning that our society is increasingly trapped in when it comes to raising and educating our children. Television, newspapers, and social media focus on sensational but statistically anomalous horror stories about school violence. Parents and the broader community work themselves into a panic, prompting politicians to vow that they will do "whatever it takes" to make everyone safer. Security technologies emerge to fill the perceived need for stronger safety measures, and schools end up spending money they don't necessarily have to implement solutions they almost certainly will never need. The presence and the media coverage of these heightened security measures increase the public's sense of fear, and the spiral descends even further.

"We're preparing for the 1,000-year flood," says Ronald Stephens. "Children are safer at school than anywhere else."

➤ AT ISSUE: SOURCES FOR DEVELOPING AN ETHICAL ARGUMENT

1. At what point in his essay does Abramsky state his thesis? Why do you think he states it where he does?
2. Does Abramsky structure his argument inductively or deductively? What is the advantage of his organization? Are there any disadvantages? Explain.
3. Abramsky begins his essay with several anecdotes. What point does he make with them? Why do you think he chose to begin his essay in this way?
4. According to Abramsky, what misconception about school shootings do many parents and school administrators have? How effectively does he address these misconceptions?
5. What kind of evidence does Abramsky provide to support his thesis? Does he provide enough evidence? Should he have provided other types of evidence? Explain.
6. Both Ed Burke (para. 18) and Derek Peterson (22) concede that they don't know for sure if their products actually work. How are they able to convince parents and school officials to purchase them? Do you find their explanations convincing?
7. In his conclusion, Abramsky quotes Ronald Stephens, the executive director of the National School Safety Center, who says about heightened security measures at school, "We're preparing for the 1,000-year flood" (31). What does he mean?
8. What ethical dilemma do parents and administrators face concerning spending on school security? If you were a parent at a school considering state-of-the-art surveillance, what would you advise school administrators to do?

The Nation published this article on August 29, 2016.



I'M A SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST—AND I THINK TEACHERS SHOULD BE ARMED

MICHAEL W. GOLDBERG

I've been a school psychologist for the past 20 years. In the wake of the school shootings in Florida, I am brought right back to December 7, 2017, the day of the deadly mass shooting at the high school I currently serve. In the aftermath, I helped to counsel students through the trauma caused by direct exposure to a murderous terrorist act—including nightmares, uncontrollable and unpredictable floods of tears, senseless “what if” questions, anxious obsessing, and survivors' guilt.

I also have a unique perspective on the school shooting problem, having been both a mental health professional and a licensed concealed firearm carrier for the past 24 years.

In addition to zero bullying tolerance, empathy building, and lockdown drills in our schools, we must bolster our self-defense. Specifically, law-abiding, psychologically stable, specially trained staff should carry concealed weapons.

This would reduce our students' trauma and has the potential to stop terror immediately—or deter it from occurring in the first place.

A Centers for Disease Control study commissioned by President Obama, “Priorities for Research to Reduce the Threat of Firearm-Related Violence,” supports this idea. The report concludes that “self-defense can be an important crime deterrent”:

Studies that directly assessed the effect of actual defensive uses of guns (i.e., incidents in which a gun was “used” by the crime victim in the sense of attacking or threatening an offender) have found consistently lower injury rates among gun-using crime victims compared with victims who used other self-protective strategies.

A 1985 survey by the Justice Department, “Armed Criminal in America—A Survey of Incarcerated Felons,” found that 54 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, “A criminal is not going to mess around with a victim he knows is armed with a gun, and 74 percent also agreed that “One reason burglars avoid houses when people are at home is that they fear being shot.” The study also reported that a third of the felons said they personally had been “scared off, shot at, wounded, or captured by an armed victim” and two-thirds said that they knew at least one other criminal who had been as well.

It follows that the majority of would-be school shooters would be deterred from attacking a school if they knew that they would likely be confronted by armed staff prior to accomplishing their evil deed.

Arming teachers is also likely to reduce trauma for our students. 8

In my experience counseling sessions after our school shooting, I found 9
that feeling totally defenseless increased the severity of the trauma for children
and staff. On the other hand, if both children and staff knew the school had
means to thwart the killer, this knowledge would serve to reduce their fear of a
potential traumatic assault. Many at my school needlessly experienced severe
emotional trauma because they were helpless to stop the violence. Helpless-
ness in the face of violence is an emotion that amplifies the effects of trauma,
and likely contributes to post-traumatic stress disorder. I'm convinced that if
highly trained school staff were armed, and the children were aware of it, the
emotional stress during any school shooting would be reduced significantly.
More importantly, school shootings may not even occur, and lost lives might
still be with us today.

Perhaps the greatest argument against highly trained armed school staff is that
this would result in more deaths to students through the accidental discharge of a fire-
arm. This appears a reasonable concern, but in reality is greatly exaggerated. For example,
In 2007, there were 220 unintentional firearm deaths of children under age 13. Over 12 times
as many children died from drowning during the same period. Because these accidental
gun death statistics include deaths caused by drunks, drug users, children, criminals,
and novice gun users, in all likelihood, acci-
dents from guns occur a lot less frequently in the hands of highly trained and
responsible personnel. And we can never fully count the bodies saved from
deterrence and successful use of a gun for self-defense.

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The topic of having guns on school grounds provokes strong visceral 11
reactions, but relying on reason and logic is the better way to save children's
lives. Guns, which have no intrinsic motivation of their own, stir phobic
responses and are assigned evil attributes. However, we need to stop our chil-
dren from being slaughtered in a place they should feel safe and welcomed.
The next school shooting is imminent if we continue as is. I propose that
schools continue to fine-tune proactive measures like anti-bullying and empa-
thy skill development, and defensive procedures that are proven effective (like
lockdown drills, but also consider a more active defense measure—carefully
screened and highly trained school staff willing to take on the enormous
responsibility of being competent and armed in a safe fashion on school
grounds. My own experience as a school psychologist and my understanding
of the research indicates that this would reduce emotional trauma as well as
reduce the amount of school shootings, saving and improving the lives of our
most valuable resource—our children.

⊗ AT ISSUE: SOURCES FOR DEVELOPING AN ETHICAL ARGUMENT

1. Goldberg begins his essay with an appeal to *ethos*. Is this appeal effective? Is he able to establish credibility? Explain.
2. In paragraph 1, Goldberg mentions that there was a deadly shooting at the school at which he works. Although his original publication included a link to a web page that gives additional information about the 2017 shooting, he doesn't provide much detail in his essay itself. Why do you think he chose to omit this information? Does this lack of detail strengthen or weaken his argument?
3. In paragraph 6, Goldberg cites a 1985 Justice Department study of armed criminals in America. In paragraph 7, he says that based on this study, "It follows that the majority of would-be school shooters would be deterred from attacking a school if they knew they would likely be confronted by armed staff." Do you think his conclusion is valid? If not, where is the flaw in his logic?
4. In paragraph 11, Goldberg concedes that "having guns on school grounds provokes strong visceral reactions." Does he do enough to address the concerns of those who have "strong visceral reactions" against his position?
5. In paragraph 10, Goldberg says that the greatest argument against having an armed school staff is the danger of a firearm accidentally discharging. Do you agree? What other dangers can you think of? Should Goldberg have addressed one or more of these?
6. In a response to Goldberg's essay, Aviva Miriam Patt, a teacher, said the following:

The people who want to arm teachers don't understand what makes us want to be teachers. The skill set that draws us to educate and nurture isn't the same skill set you need to shoot someone. Especially when the person with the gun is one of your students. We're trained to understand, empathize, and de-escalate—not to kill.

What ethical principle is Patt stating? Is this principle self-evident, or does it apply just to those who believe as Patt does?

This piece ran on February 22, 2018, in the *Atlantic*.



ARMING EDUCATORS VIOLATES THE SPIRIT OF THE SECOND AMENDMENT

VANN R. NEWKIRK II

The Second Amendment is a remarkable piece of the Constitution. “A well 1 regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed,” it reads.

Set aside for the moment questions about its practical interpretations today 2 and its usefulness as a legal tenet—the provision presents a starkly revolutionary moral and political theory. Written by the powerful men in charge of the nation, the amendment expressly preserves the right of individuals to protect themselves against the future tyranny of the powerful men in charge of the nation. In fact, it enshrines this as a moral obligation, mixing into the very core of American civics the expectation that uncivil disobedience might be a necessary patriotic duty should the government cease to serve the people.

That amendment is again front and center today, as the country continues 3 to grapple with serious questions about gun violence in the wake of the massacre at the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. This particular incident seems to have shaken the public consciousness more than some previous shootings, and people on all sides of the political spectrum appear primed to at least consider solutions. Unfortunately for students, the solutions that appear to be gaining traction so far include further arming school police, arming students, and even giving schools drones. Not only is the efficacy of these measures dubious, they run counter to the ideals of the Second Amendment that are often invoked to justify them—extending the power of a militarized state at the expense of individual liberty.

President Trump has led the push for arming teachers for some time now. He 4 has repeatedly attacked gun-free zones in schools, arguing at an October 2015 presidential debate that such spaces provide “target practice for the sickos and for the mentally ill.” He’s kept up that critique as president in the wake of the Parkland shooting. While attempting to clarify or correct news reports suggesting that he wanted to arm teachers, he tweeted about his desire to arm teachers, endorsing giving “concealed guns to gun adept teachers with military or special training experience—only the best.” He also tweeted that “a ‘gun free’ school is a magnet for bad people.”

But Trump is merely the vanguard in a deepening movement to arm 5 educators in order to stop school shootings. Bills across the country have been proposed to allow concealed handguns in schools, some provisions already exist for postsecondary campuses, and there are initiatives to train teachers in the use of weapons. Education Secretary Betsy DeVos said in an interview last week that states “clearly have the opportunity and the option” to arm teachers. On Thursday at the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC), National Rifle Association Executive Vice President Wayne LaPierre echoed that sentiment, saying, “we must immediately harden our schools.”

For many others, such “hardening” goes well beyond just arming teachers. In 6 the Florida county where the Parkland massacre took place, the sheriff announced yesterday that police officers will be allowed to carry rifles on school grounds.

Many other districts are already well beyond “hardened.” Los Angeles 7 school police procured grenade launchers, rifles, and an armored personnel carrier through a federal surplus program. Police in Compton, California, are allowed to wear AR-15 rifles, and a Colorado district began distributing them in 2016. There are now plenty of school districts across America with armed school police officers, complete with metal detectors, body armor, and K-9 units. Even the patently outlandish suggestion of *Newsmax* host Wayne Root to provide schools with armed drones isn’t so far from reality. Schools already have drones, though not (yet) armed.

As *Vox*’s Jane Coaston argued, these suggestions mostly amount to secu- 8 rity theater, and there is little data suggesting that armed school officials have a meaningful impact on student safety. Even metal detectors haven’t really helped reduce violence, and that’s against both the steady stream of more mundane events of gun violence that plague some schools and the annual massacres.

Logically, even as Trump seemed to acknowledge in his backtracking, the idea of arming teachers is suspect. The “good guy with a gun” theory underpinning the movement has never had any real credibility beyond a few choice anecdotes, and the training required to make armed teachers anything more than a liability would be onerous. Teachers already work long hours for relatively little pay, and many school districts have dismissed the idea as simply impractical.

But the movement for hardening isn’t just impractical or lacking in 10 evidentiary support; it’s also a dystopian stroke of authoritarianism that runs deeply counter to the ideas embodied in the Constitution. Increasingly militarized school resource officers don’t just passively wait for mass shootings; they have daily encounters with students that appear to be increasing in frequency. Brutality is endemic. *Mother Jones* chronicled 28 serious student injuries and one death from 2010 to 2015 in such encounters. The brunt of those brutal incidents and arrests falls on black students, and high-profile incidents of officers kicking students, choking them, handcuffing third-graders, and slamming students to the ground are all too common.

While most teachers are fiercely dedicated to their students, steady reports 11 of abuse from some teachers, as well as reports of racial slurs and racial bias, should be strong reasons to be skeptical of arming teachers. Especially in the often-fraught environments of under-resourced classrooms, it’s probably not a good idea to have *anybody* with a gun present.

More broadly, hardening proposals posit that the only way to keep 12 kids safe is to raise them in police states, kept under guard by killer drones, assault rifles, and armed teachers. As Coaston writes, these setups will almost certainly tend towards gross violations of students’ First Amendment rights to speech and Fourth Amendment rights to privacy, and will do so along already-

“The ‘good guy with a gun’ theory has never had any real credibility beyond a few choice anecdotes.” 9

established lines of race and class. As a person who attended a school where violence by resource officers was a fact of life for low-income black students, I can offer at least anecdotal support for this argument.

But hardening proposals also exhibit a circular logic that runs deeply counter to the spirit of the Second Amendment. Again, that provision implies a duty to resist tyranny, in all the forms of military, surveillance, and governmental overreach that helped spark the revolution. Suggestions to create a police state in American schools, however, mirror other pro-authoritarian tendencies that run counter to this instinct. In the creation of the carceral state, in the expansion of drug laws, and in the extreme militarization of police in recent years, people have argued that placing more guns in the hands of authorities is the only way to keep people safe. But why would pro-Second Amendment enthusiasts be in favor of providing *more* firepower to the government?

One legal theory used to oppose the preferences of many defenders of the Second Amendment is based on the fact that the militarized American police state has advanced far beyond the ability of any possible well-regulated militia to stop it. But lost in that observation is the fact that Americans—many of them staunch gun-rights advocates—have pushed repeatedly to bolster the military and the creep of militarism into other civic arenas. They've then trapped the country in an arms race between government and civilians, one in which civilians face severe losses from both state and private violence. And now students, protected in schools by the most basic tenets of the social contract, find themselves in the line of fire.

⊕ AT ISSUE: SOURCES FOR DEVELOPING AN ETHICAL ARGUMENT

1. Newkirk begins his essay with a three-paragraph discussion of the Second Amendment. What point does he make? How do these paragraphs prepare readers for the rest of the essay?
2. Does Newkirk treat those who don't agree with him fairly? How does he describe them? What language does he use when he deals with those with whom he disagrees?
3. In paragraph 8, Newkirk calls some efforts to "harden" schools "security theater." What does he mean? What evidence does he provide to support this contention? Do you agree with his assessment?
4. In paragraph 12, Newkirk says, "hardening proposals posit that the only way to keep kids safe is to raise them in police states." Is this a fair assessment, or is Newkirk engaging in hyperbole? Explain.
5. According to Newkirk, how do hardening proposals run "counter to the spirit of the Second Amendment" (para. 13)?
6. On the whole, does Newkirk support or oppose the Second Amendment's provision of the right to bear arms? How do you know?
7. A **paradox** is a contradictory statement that may indeed be true. In what sense does the last sentence of this essay express a paradox?