

Arming School Personnel Consensus Question Research

TOPIC 1: Decision Making

1. Should the state government be involved in determining the right of local school boards to arm school personnel? With which of the following statements do you agree?
 - A. State government should not be involved, allowing each local school board to make this decision using the current law.
 - B. State government should officially authorize local school boards to have this decision-making power but set up criteria for how this decision will be made e.g., public knowledge, who makes this decision, etc.
 - C. State government should determine criteria for the implementation of arming school personnel e.g. training, who should be armed, storage, etc.
 - D. State government should determine B and C.
 - E. State government should mandate that only police and specialized school safety officers be armed. This would completely remove the decision from local school boards.

Research:

Federal law (18 U.S.C § 922(q)) generally makes it unlawful for people with “functional firearms” (loaded) to be closer than 1000 feet from any public or private school property. In Ohio there is a loophole in this law (Ohio Law R.C. § 2923.122) that allows local school boards to provide written authorization to specific individuals with concealed carry permits (or concealed handgun licenses) to carry/have access to functional firearms on school property.

http://www.epcschools.org/documents/contentdocuments/document_23_5_698.pdf

The Ohio School Board Association takes neither a positive nor negative stand on arming school personnel, instead leaving the decision to each individual school board based on the needs of their community. (Then) Attorney General Mike DeWine (2013) believed the decision to arm personnel is best made by local school boards.

<https://www.ohioschoolboards.org/sites/default/files/ProtectingOhioSchoolchildren.pdf>

Pros v Cons:

The Pro for State Government involvement is the authority to set consistent standards, ensure transparency, use experts to develop policies and procedures, and ensure standards are met.

The Con for State Government involvement is that each town, city and county is unique and therefore can more effectively meet the needs of their residents.

2. Regarding the transparency of local school boards’ decision to arm school personnel, with which statement do you agree?
 - A. School boards should have the right to make an executive decision to arm school personnel. Executive decisions do not have to be disclosed to the public.
 - B. School boards should have the right to make an executive decision to arm school personnel but should inform the public about this decision.
 - C. The community members should be involved in voicing their opinions to the school boards but the board ultimately makes the decision.
 - D. The community should make the decision through a public process.
 - E. Arming school personnel should not be permitted.

Research:

School boards across the state have grappled with solutions to keep students and staff safe, instituting multi-layered measures including restricting access to school buildings, buzzing in visitors, security cameras, panic buttons, and specially trained security officers. The debate continues about arming school personnel in Ohio. Some school boards have chosen to either quietly or publicly authorize staff members to carry guns on school property.

<https://www.dispatch.com/news/20180223/arming-teachers-legal-in-ohio-but-not-always-popular>

Some school boards in smaller rural Ohio communities have voted to approve arming teachers. In Madison County the decision was met with litigation from a group of concerned parents who filed to have the right to know if school boards approved arming school personnel and the right to critical details such as the policy itself and implementation procedures. Butler County Judge - Charles Pater - ruled that the school could continue with their policy of allowing armed personnel on campus and did not require school staffers to complete the minimum of 27 hours of training.

<https://www.wcpo.com/news/local-news/judge-rules-teachers-dont-need-police-level-training-to-carry-guns-in-madison-schools>

As of April, 2020, the 12th District Court of Appeals in Middletown reversed the Butler County ruling with a decision that all school employees must have the same kind of training that police officers receive to carry concealed weapons in an Ohio school district. The Appeals Court said that Ohio law “requires anyone who carries a firearm in schools to have undergone a minimum of 728 hours of law enforcement training.” Essentially saying only law enforcement officers can be armed on school property.

<https://chronicle.com/news/208552/court-ohio-school-workers-must-have-training-to-carry-guns/>

In response to the 12th District Court of Appeals decision, Bill Coley, District 4 is the primary sponsor of HB 317 that would exempt school personnel from training if going armed in a school safety zone. This bill would give school boards discretion on the amount of training required. As of September 2020, this bill was approved by the Senate Oversight and Reform Committee and sent it to the Rules Committee which will determine when it is voted on by the Ohio Senate.

<https://www.columbusunderground.com/senate-committee-approves-school-firearms-legislation-ocj1>

<https://www.columbusunderground.com/legislature-considers-reducing-amount-of-training-to-arm-teachers-ocj1>

Researchers Note: Please see Question 7 for more information on SB317.

Sidney Local School, along with their multi-layered safety measures, have a team of 40 secretly armed educators including teachers, principals and secretaries. They have completed 16 hours of training. They have access to biometric boxes and bullet proof vests scattered around the seven schools in the district and can be accessed within one minute.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/01/us/armed-teachers-guns-schools.html>

Additionally, Hamilton City School District dropped a plan to arm teachers and other staff members. They said they needed more information and time to see the outcome of a school safety tax levy that ultimately failed.

Researchers Note: Regarding Transparency, these are just a few examples of school board decisions to arm or discuss to arm school personnel. These discussions that have either been available to the public or become public after the school board decision. Ohio schools districts are allowed to keep certain meeting minutes confidential. Therefore we have no way to know exactly how many school districts in Ohio allow their personnel to be armed.

3. Each of the following groups have their own opinions or policy statements of whether arming school personnel increases the safety of schools. Should the opinions or policy statements of these groups be considered when decision makers are determining whether or not to arm school personnel?

A. Teachers	Yes	No	No Consensus
B. School administrators	Yes	No	No Consensus
C. All other school personnel	Yes	No	No Consensus
D. School resource officers (SRO)	Yes	No	No Consensus
E. Law enforcement personnel	Yes	No	No Consensus
F. Students	Yes	No	No Consensus
G. Parents	Yes	No	No Consensus
H. Community members	Yes	No	No Consensus

Research:

The American Federation of Teachers, the National Education Association, the National PTA, and the Fraternal Order of Police of Ohio reject the idea of arming school personnel.

<https://www.dispatch.com/news/20180223/arming-teachers-legal-in-ohio-but-not-always-popular>

In a March 2018 survey nearly 73% of 500 teachers opposed arming school personnel. In another survey, 63% of parents opposed arming school personnel.

<https://everytownresearch.org>

The National Association of School Resource Officers supports placing a well-trained, carefully selected school resource officer in every school instead of arming teachers and school personnel. If a school district can legally arm school personnel the NASRO offers safety recommendations including training on-par with law enforcement positions and not abandoning their students to seek out an assailant.

<https://www.nasro.org/news/2018/03/01/news-releases/nasro-expands-upon-recommendation-on-arming-teachers/>

There is concern among law enforcement officials that school personnel would have the ability to effectively make split second, life-or-death decisions.

<https://everytownresearch.org>

In response to the George Floyd incident in Minneapolis, June, 2020, school boards across the country are re-evaluating the presence of law enforcement in schools citing potential implicit bias against students and staff of color.

https://www.huffpost.com/entry/police-in-schools_n_5ed6803ec5b68a110026cd58

The idea of “well trained” school personnel including hiring veterans (The Troops to Teachers or TTT program) or retired law enforcement officers as teachers is catching on around the country. The Federal School Safety Commission became the first federal entity to endorse arming school staff. Since February 2018, the month of the Parkland shooting, 215 schools have chosen to arm staff.

<https://www2.ed.gov/documents/school-safety/school-safety-report.pdf>

Ohio’s Buckeye Firearm Association has experienced an increase of school staff members signing up for their FASTER program, a 27-hour class that includes handgun training and medical care.

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