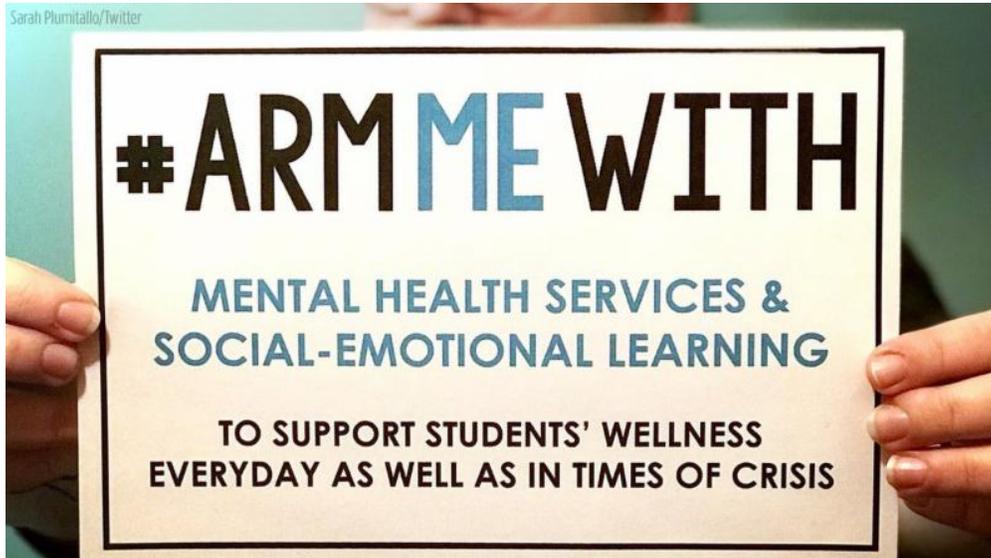


[#ArmMeWith...](#)

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This week, the President of the United States met with survivors of another deadly school shooting, this time at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Florida where 17 people were killed on the 14th of February. Let me say it again, the President of the United States invited survivors to the White House. Yes, this particularly American version of mass murder has percolated to the attention of the most senior office in the country.

We are all struggling to understand what is happening in the US such that mass shootings of innocent citizens have become, if not commonplace, not unusual. One possible solution that the President proposed is arming teachers with guns. Given that it takes time for first responders to reach crisis settings, the President raised the possibility that lives might be saved by empowering teachers with weapons to defend themselves and their students. Clearly, the President shares the aspirations expressed around the country. We all want to prevent this senseless loss of life. How we get there has us stymied.



[Photo Credit](#)

Mass shootings are a type of wicked problem that cry out for a solution. Alas, if a simple solution were readily available, it would already have been adopted. Strategies that we have tried are not working, so we should be asking outside-the-box questions, like whether more guns is better than fewer guns in schools. That being said, the data suggest that arming teachers with guns is a recipe for disaster. Five reasons why it won't work.

1. More guns = more deaths. Over and over, the data tell the same story. The obvious facts: It is impossible to die by firearms if no firearms are available. And around the world, in countries with more firearms, both men and women are at greater risk for dying by firearm homicide. Simply put, [more guns means more deaths by guns, whether it be by homicide or suicide.](#)

2. More guns = more confusion. In a recent shooting in a Colorado Walmart store, police took five hours to identify the suspect to the public. Once shoppers started to realize the danger they were in, many drew their own guns in self-defense. When detectives reviewed video footage of the store, they noticed multiple people drawing guns, each of whom had to be eliminated systematically as the suspect. This slowed the process of identifying the actual perpetrator and delayed safety information being given to the public. If [police struggle to distinguish between suspects and those with guns for self-defense,](#) how are teachers supposed to?

3. Teachers don't want guns. [Not only do they not want them, they feel safer without them.](#) If a select 20% of teachers were granted access to firearms in classes as proposed by the President, we would be creating an additional 700,000 opportunities for something to go awry. Students could attempt to steal weapons from lockers or to disarm teachers carrying them. This could lead to unpredictable outcomes resulting from situations beyond the teacher training, potentially putting teachers in a situation to shoot their own students to protect others. And if we just consider the odds, the probabilities are quite low that a teacher would be in the rare situation of a school shooting and have the wherewithal to save the lives of innocent students and other school personnel. Instead the data overwhelmingly indicate that when weapons are within reach, the number of accidental deaths by firearms goes up.

4. Being armed and having the opportunity and willingness to shoot are different things. The likelihood of a teacher being able to locate, access, load, and accurately use a gun in a life-threatening situation is low. School and university campuses are large areas with multiple rooms and corridors filled with adrenaline and people running and hiding at such moments of crisis. Active shooters are unlikely to be within range of the armed teacher. [And although we might want to believe that guns would be especially beneficial to the potentially weaker victims, the data say this is not the case across a range of circumstances.](#)

5. Schools as citadels for the values and knowledge we want to transmit to the next generation. Even one life lost is too many, but at these horrific moments in time, it is critical that we keep in mind that mass shootings represent a tiny proportion of the number of lives lost by firearms in America. [In fact, about twice as many individuals die by suicide involving firearms as compared to murders involving guns.](#) Across the board, access to guns means more lives lost by firearms. The higher mission of education is to imbue future generations with what they need to create meaningful, purposeful lives. And we have no evidence that arming teachers with guns will aid in that mission.

In the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that." Arming teachers with guns will amount to groping in the dark for a simple solution where none can be found.