



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on July 8, 2013

South Dakota Becomes One of the First States to Allow Armed Teachers

On July 1 South Dakota's "School Sentinel" law [became effective](#), making that state one of the first in the nation to allow teachers and other school officials to carry a sidearm in the classroom. Signed into law in March by Gov. Dennis Daugaard, the law provides that teachers wishing to carry must first obtain permission from the school district and then undergo rigorous training. Supporters said that such a law will make schools more safe by allowing teachers to become "first responders," while those opposed were concerned about the risks involved in allowing loaded weapons on school grounds. At this writing no school district has adopted the policy.



South Dakota's law verges on being groundbreaking because it specifically affirms the ability of teachers to carry guns, but Texas, according to the *Ft. Worth Star-Telegram*, [has previously allowed](#) any person to carry a gun in schools with district permission. And a handful of states do not specifically ban guns from campuses, leaving the decision to allow guns on campus up to universities.

Philip Hodges [celebrated the event](#), even though no teachers have applied for permission to carry, yet. It will take only a few to protect the entire school, wrote Hodges at GodFatherPolitics.com. Those teachers who suffer from [hoplophobia](#) will sort themselves out of the process, while a few are likely to request permission. Those few, however, will be able to protect both teachers and students, as a potential murderer would face the "element of surprise," not knowing who is armed and who isn't. It would also likely reduce the risk of an armed security guard being the primary, if not the only, target for an attacker.

One of the reasons given for allowing armed teachers is the police's slow response time. The timeline from a 9-1-1 call to the arrival of an armed official first responder is about 11 minutes, [according to Massad Ayoob](#), a 39-year veteran of police work and training:

The call has to come in to 9-1-1. The message then has to be relayed from the dispatchers to the field. Those officers have to GET THERE, and none of them can suspend the time/space continuum and freeze the situation until they arrive. [Emphasis in original.]

It took Israel less than a year to implement a similar plan following an attack on a school in 1974. On May 15, three armed members of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine entered the Netiv Meir Elementary School [in Ma'alot](#) in northern Israel, where some students were staying overnight, at 4 a.m. and took 115 people hostage, including 105 children. The attackers demanded the release of Palestinian militants, with a deadline of 6 p.m. At 5:32 p.m., an Israeli elite special forces team entered the school and ended the threat but not before the terrorists had killed 31 hostages and wounded



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another 70.

[The Israeli policy](#) allows volunteer school personnel, as well as parents and grandparents, to be “seeded” throughout the schools after intensive training. Training lasts a minimum of 40 hours, which includes pro-active measures, legal issues, trauma training, and post-attack issues. Since implementation, there have been no successful mass murders at any Israeli school, while those few attacks that were attempted have been quickly defused without loss of innocents’ lives.

Oren Shemtov, CEO of Israel’s Academy of Security and Investigations, explained that attacks [last only a matter of minutes](#), but trained teachers could “buy time for the kids to escape” while police race to the scene. Dov Zwering, an Israeli police veteran, said that since most attacks in the United States wind up with the shooter killing himself when the police arrive, “Why not challenge him earlier?”

As Ayoub reflected on the Newtown shooting during a training session of the International Law Enforcement Educators and Trainers Association:

Every cop in that large classroom empathized [with] the horror those first officers faced when they got there [at Sandy Hook Elementary School], to discover that the killer had already killed himself and that there was absolutely nothing they could do to bring 20 innocent little children and their 6 helplessly slain protectors back to life.

And each of them knew something else: it would have been far better to have been the first to find a school resource officer, a private security guard, or even a schoolteacher with a smoking gun in her hand standing over the corpse of a dead would-be murderer, the only casualty of the day.

The worst [school massacre](#) in the United States occurred in Bath, Michigan, already in 1927. Forty-five people were killed, including 38 children. On July 1, 86 years later, South Dakota is among the first states to pass a law that could improve school safety. Why did it take 86 years? For example, following 9/11 the Federal Flight Deck Officer program (FFDO) was implemented within months, allowing volunteer pilots on commercial airline flights to carry firearms for defensive purposes. Are students any less precious than passengers?

It is hoped that South Dakota’s initiative is quickly imitated by other states, allowing volunteers to arm themselves and reduce the threat of more [Columbines](#), [Sandy Hooks](#), and [Virginia Techs](#).

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