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ENGL 102: Research and Academic Writing

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Your name, your professor's name, the course name, and the due date should appear on separate double spaced lines flush left at the top of the paper (see <https://style.mla.org/formatting-papers/>).

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Your last name and the page number should appear flush right in the header of every page.

Guns in School: Why Allowing Firearms at Schools Will Keep Them Safe

The day of April 20, that will not soon be forgotten. On that morning in Littleton, Columbine High School with a plan to kill. Their names were together they carried "four guns and more than thirty homemade bombs" (Kleck 1447). In only 49 minutes, they murdered twelve students and one teacher, wounded two dozen other individuals, and committed suicide (1447). This bloodbath was not an act taken on impulse; the two students had planned for over a year (1451).

Place the title of your paper in headline style capitalization as a header before the text of your paper starts.

In-text citations consist of the author's last name and the page number placed in parentheses at the end of the sentence, before the final punctuation (54).

...edy, continually prompt debate over how to handle guns in schools. Two can argue that guns should be all while gun control advocates insist that schools must remain gun-free. Current state levels, laws exist that prohibit the carrying of firearms in school zones; however, it is

If you use the name of the source in the text of the sentence, you do not need to repeat the author's last name in parentheses as well (54).

All text should be a readable typeface font (like Times New Roman) 12pt., and black.

...specifically because of such laws that school shootings occur. Schools are vulnerable to attack. Americans are helpless whereas the presence of licensed gun-carriers could stop an attacker from killing or even deter the attacker from assaulting a school in the first place. Laws should permit legally licensed and trained individuals. At the same time, people must be mindful of the responsibility of carrying a weapon, even defensively.

All margins should be set to 1".

The lines throughout the paper should be double-spaced.

Only place one character space between sentences.

To fully understand why the presence of guns at school can reduce violence, one must first understand the context of gun ownership in America. For “most of America’s history” (Kopel 518), no one would have thought of guns as a problem. According to Kopel, “It was not uncommon for students to bring guns to school, stored in their lockers or automobiles, to use for hunting or target shooting after school” (518). The banning of guns on school grounds is a relatively new development in American legislature, occurring primarily over the last few decades.

School environments have changed drastically in recent history. A wide majority of states and school supervisors have prohibited the presence of guns on campuses. At the federal level, Congress passed the Gun-Free School Zone Act (GFSZA) in 1990 and then a revised version in 1996 after the Supreme Court overruled the original law. The GFSZA banned firearms in school zones of K-12 schools (Kopel 518-19), but it does not, affect K-12 schools on private property or higher education institutions. Therefore, anyone with a permit for a gun could legally carry his or her weapon on a university or private school’s property if the state or school itself has not banned firearms at the school in question (Kopel 519). Thus, regulations exist at the federal, state, and school administration levels, which bar the carrying of guns in school zones. If these governing bodies lifted the ban on guns at schools, the safety of the schools would increase drastically. The idea that gun-free necessarily equals safe is a persistent but fallible mindset in modern American culture. This perspective is a dangerous one; a gun-free location is only a target for criminals.

American history itself reveals that school shootings occurred much less often before gun bans were in place. If responsible, licensed gun-carrying individuals protect the school, the mere knowledge that they are carrying weapons might be enough to deter a rogue student from assaulting the school. Prior to 1995, teachers were permitted to carry guns in schools in many

states (Lott). In fact, before 1990, America had only witnessed seven school shootings in its entire “214-year history” (Kopel 519). School shootings increased greatly only after Congress enacted the GFSZA, and individual states and schools set up their own bans. According to Kopel, in the short seventeen years after the appearance of gun bans, there were a total of seventy-eight school shootings (519).

Gun control advocates, however, do not believe that allowing guns in schools would increase the presence of guns in schools would increase such incidents and attempt to refute their opposition, advocates of gun control rely on a logic that emphasizes the danger of guns. According to Martinson,

If a quote exceeds 4 lines of text, then start the quote on a new line, and indent the entire quote 1” from the left margin (76-77).

Some gun control advocates are personal witnesses or survivors of such tragedies and desperately want society to find a solution that will prevent such tragedies from committing these atrocities to others in the future. They argue that reducing gun availability in pursuit of this ideal end; however, they do not consider certain aspects of the issue, such as the different ways that gun availability affects the nature of societies where guns are available. (3)

Do not place quotation marks around block quotes, and place the parenthetical citation after the final punctuation (77).

When reviewed with close scrutiny, the foundation of their beliefs proves to be unsupported.

Gun control advocates believe that the presence of more guns necessarily equals more violence. Therefore, under this logic, they argue that keeping guns out of schools and making gun control laws stricter overall will reduce violence in school. Bill Smith, who taught at Thurston High School when a shooting occurred there in May of 1998, argues emotionally on the subject in the article he wrote with McMorris. While his emotion is certainly valid due to the personal nature of the issue, he lets his emotion lead him to make assumptions on the relationship between students and guns. Smith claims that “[societies] with extremely accessible

firearms” will unavoidably experience “deadly violence” (11). He also insists that “it should be obvious that legislation decreasing kids’ exposure to guns will positively affect the safety of ... schools” and lists several changes he believes should be made to gun control laws (11). These include intensifying the punishments for those who sell or give firearms to minors, “[holding] gun owners responsible” if juveniles steal their weapons and use them unlawfully, and forcing “background checks and waiting periods” on anyone attempting to buy a weapon (11). Without including supporting evidence for his claims, he asserts that students who cannot obtain weapons from parents or by illegal measures will be “less likely” to cause school shootings (11).

It appears that, in at least some cases, gun control advocates argue from a perspective of fear about the danger of guns rather than from an informed and rational foundation. Smith exhibits this in his contention that the availability of guns automatically leads to violence. In the article, “Students v Guns,” students and faculty who have similarly argued against allowing guns in schools admit that “the idea frighten[s] them.”

Societies with high levels of guns are not necessarily violent ones. For instance, Switzerland, a country with “more firepower per person than any other country in the world” and loose gun control laws, has never had a school massacre, despite the fact that “kids and guns mix freely” there (McMorris and Smith 40). In fact, Switzerland overall has fewer burglaries and homicides than England, even though gun control laws in England are very strict (McMorris and Smith 40). The idea that the prevalence of guns leads to high violence rates is factually unfounded. Furthermore, making gun control laws stricter will not stop rogue students from obtaining weapons. According to Chapman, “most of these spectacular episodes are so freakish that they are not amenable to regulatory solutions” (73). That is, a student who is so determined to harm others will not be afraid of taking risks to obtain firearms, regardless of any laws that

attempt to keep him from getting the weapons or threaten harsh consequences for doing so. For instance, shooters often cite sources (Chapman 73-4; Kleck 1454). In the case of a shooter who was 17 years old murdered his grandfather in order to steal two guns from him (Chapman 72-74). School shootings often end in the suicide of the shooter, as in the Columbine event (Kleck 1447), the student firing the weapon would have no fear of the repercussions of his actions.

If you cite more than one source in a parenthetical reference, then separate the sources with a semi-colon (58).

Another failure of gun control laws appears in the fact that sometimes student shooters do obtain their guns through legal methods. Kleck states that Harris and Klebold, the students who fired on Columbine, had a “legally eligible” individual purchase guns for them several months before their attack on the school—although, when the shooting finally took place in April 1999, Harris was old enough to legally buy a gun himself (1452). Additionally, in two shootings that occurred in Pearl, Mississippi, and Springfield, Oregon, the shooters used weapons they possessed legally (1452). The question to consider at this point is this: if just a few legal, gun-owning individuals are malicious enough to break the law by bringing guns to school and firing on students and faculty, why make it illegal for responsible gun owners to bring their firearms to school to protect it from such individuals?

Maintaining the ban of guns in schools will leave schools vulnerable, and school massacres will continue to take place. American law at the federal and state levels should allow legally licensed and trained individuals to possess firearms on school grounds so that responsible gun owners can defend schools from attackers. Although gun control advocates argue that the presence of guns necessarily equals violence, statistics from both American history and other cultures suggests that violence actually decreases in societies with a high availability of guns. While not all schools should be expected to immediately allow guns on their property, if at least

some schools permitted students and faculty to carry guns, parents could decide for themselves what kind of protection they want their children to have.

The debate over gun control and whether guns should be permitted in schools is a critical one and could have serious consequences in terms of lives lost. The debate is especially important to consider from an ethical perspective because human life is infinite and applies to every human being, both those who could be victims of school shooters themselves. The Bible asserts the value of human life many times, such as in the book of Genesis when God “[made] man in [his] image” (*New King James Version*, Gen. 1.26) to the infinite love that God expressed towards humanity by sending his Son to earth to die (John 3.16).

In an interview with Regent professor, Russell Wideman, he expressed mixed feelings about the idea of guns being allowed in schools. He said, “I have mixed feelings about how to view guns from the perspective of the Second Amendment’s regard for guns”—that is, a complete understanding of the right to own guns. He said, “to pull the trigger. According to Wideman, when a person pulls the trigger, the shooter does not “know the state of [that being’s] soul;” that person could pass into “eternity” right then because of the actions of the shooter. Therefore, Christians, and people in general, must be mindful of the deeper meaning behind this controversial issue. This applies even more so to those who are gun owners themselves, who have the potential to, as Wideman puts it, “determine someone’s death date”—a decision that not everyone could, or should, be able to make.

The Bible is clear about how God feels about murder: “He who strikes a man so that he dies shall surely be put to death” (Exod. 21.12). However, the Bible also expresses a need to

When citing the Bible, include the version in italics as well as the book, chapter, and verse. Separate the chapter and verse by a period, and only abbreviate the book if it appears in the parentheses, not in the text (122-123).

You do not need to include the version with subsequent citations of the Bible unless you switch to a different version (123).

When citing a source that does not have stable location information (e.g., page numbers, paragraph numbers, or time stamps), do not count unnumbered paragraphs. Include enough information for the reader to find the corresponding entry in the works cited list in the text—usually the author’s last name (56)

respond to the violence of others appropriately: “But if a man acts with premeditation against his neighbor, to kill him by treachery, you shall take him from My altar, that he may die” (Exod. 21. 14). Therefore, people must respect both the need to preserve life and the need to put a stop to evil actions. If a malicious individual enters a building and starts firing at innocent civilians, and a responsible gun owner has an opportunity to shoot him, that civilian should not only value the lives of the innocents but also the life of the shooter. In an instance like this when one has to make a “quick judgment call” (Wideman) about how to best preserve life, having a strong understanding of human worth will help one respond appropriately. Perhaps the person could talk the attacker down or intimidate the attacker with his own weapon—or maybe the only way to stop him would be to shoot him. Every circumstance is different. Whether a person is the one wielding the gun, the representative voting on gun control legislation, or the parent choosing to send his children to a school that permits or prohibits weapons, he or she must recognize the implications of his or her actions in light of God’s desires for humanity.

The header “Works Cited” should appear centered at the top of your Works Cited page.

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All entries should be arranged alphabetically by the author’s last name.

All works cited entries should be double spaced with hanging indents.