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## **Implementing Florida's Guardian Program in Walnut Creek, California**

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# **Implementing Florida's Guardian Program in Walnut Creek, California**

By

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EMPA 396

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### **Abstract**

School shootings across the US are on the rise. This study examined Florida's Guardian Program, an untraditional approach to combat school shootings on K-12 campuses. Moreover, it contrasted the Guardian Program with policies in California and how the two strategies affect school safety differently at the local level. This study set the stage for a quasi-experiment by comparing the two sets of policies and using a Mixed-Methods Research (MMR) approach. A total of 62 surveys were received, and five interviews were conducted at the local level in the County of Contra Costa to examine the safety concerns of schools in the City of Walnut Creek. The research findings showed that elements of the Guardian Program would enhance Walnut Creek's K-12 campuses' resilience to active shooter emergencies.

***Keywords:*** Florida's Guardian Program, K-12 Schools, School Shootings, Response Time, School Hardening

## Table of Contents

<b><u>Abstract</u></b> .....	2
<b><u>Chapter I: Introduction</u></b> .....	8
<u>Background</u> .....	8
<u>Statement of the Problem</u> .....	9
<u>Purpose of the Study</u> .....	9
<u>Significance of the Study</u> .....	10
<u>Research Question or Hypothesis</u> .....	10
<u>Theory of Change and Assumptions</u> .....	11
<u>Limitations</u> .....	11
<u>Operational Definitions</u> .....	12
<u>Expected Impact of the Research</u> .....	13
<u>Summary</u> .....	13
<b><u>Chapter 2: Literature Review</u></b> .....	15
<u>Introduction</u> .....	15
<u>What is Florida’s Guardian Program?</u> .....	15
<u>What are the Impacts and Benefits of Florida's Guardian Program?</u> .....	17
<u>Parkland Commission Findings</u> .....	17
<u>Theme I: Response Time</u> .....	18
<u>Theme II: Feasibility of Hardening Schools</u> .....	20
<u>Theme III: Public Confidence</u> .....	21
<u>What elements are lacking in California’s Communities?</u> .....	21
<u>California</u> .....	21
<u>Contra Costa County</u> .....	22
<u>Walnut Creek</u> .....	23
<u>Summary</u> .....	24
<b><u>Chapter 3: Research Methodology</u></b> .....	25
<u>Introduction</u> .....	25
<u>Main Research Question</u> .....	25
<u>Theory of Change Assumptions</u> .....	26
<u>Operational Definitions</u> .....	26
<u>Population Sampling Strategy and Procedure</u> .....	28
<u>Data Analysis</u> .....	28

<u>Internal and External Validity</u> .....	29
<u>Limitations</u> .....	29
<u>Summary</u> .....	30
<b><u>Chapter 4: Results and Findings</u></b> .....	31
<u>Introduction</u> .....	31
<u>Assumption 1 (A1)</u> .....	32
<u>Quantitative Results</u> .....	32
<u>Qualitative Data Analysis and Results</u> .....	35
<u>Findings</u> .....	36
<u>Assumption 2 (A2)</u> .....	36
<u>Quantitative Results</u> .....	36
<u>Qualitative Data Analysis and Results</u> .....	39
<u>Findings</u> .....	40
<u>Assumption 3 (A3)</u> .....	40
<u>Quantitative Results</u> .....	40
<u>Qualitative Results</u> .....	44
<u>Findings</u> .....	46
<u>Summary</u> .....	46
<b><u>Chapter 5: Conclusions, Recommendations, and Areas of Further Research</u></b> .....	48
<u>Introduction</u> .....	48
<u>Assumption 1(A1)</u> .....	49
<u>Conclusion:</u> .....	49
<u>Assumption 2 (A2)</u> .....	49
<u>Conclusion:</u> .....	49
<u>Assumption 3:</u> .....	50
<u>Conclusion:</u> .....	50
<u>Recommendations</u> .....	50
<u>Recommendation One</u> .....	50
<u>Recommendation Two</u> .....	51
<u>Recommendation Three</u> .....	51
<u>Areas of Further Research</u> .....	53
<b><u>References</u></b> .....	55
<u>Appendix A: Gantt Chart</u> .....	57

<u>Appendix B: Data Collection Instruments</u> .....	58
<u>Quantitative Survey Questionnaire</u> .....	58
<u>Qualitative Data Collection Instrument</u> .....	62

## **Chapter I: Introduction**

### **Background**

The black-swan theory is a metaphor used to describe an unexpected event that seemed extremely unlikely. For example, the Columbine Shooting in 1999 completely altered how society viewed school safety. The tragedy opened the door for a new type of violent crime with untraditional motives (Police Executive Research Forum, 2014). Since Columbine, places that were never considered vulnerable to attacks of such callousness, like schools and places of worship, were forced to recalibrate their risk assessments. Mass shootings on school campuses no longer come as a surprise. Nevertheless, lawmakers and decision-makers crafting public safety have taken different approaches while prioritizing various initiatives.

Hiring private security and arming teachers are ways schools can harden their campuses. However, limited data supports the notion that hardening campuses would produce more resilient schools. It remains to be proven that armed guards and teachers would respond to and neutralize an active shooter more quickly than traditional responses. Additionally, the feasibility of hiring private security and armed teachers remains to be determined. Lastly, public safety is closely related to public confidence. However, it is unclear how the students, parents, and teachers, including the general public, would feel if their schools were to arm guards and teachers.

The contrast between Florida's and California's policy and program initiatives makes for an excellent case study for this research. Florida has prioritized hardening its schools through its Guardian Program, allowing schools to contract out security and permit staff to carry firearms. In contrast, California has focused its efforts on mental health and gun safety, even diverting funds away from security programs and initiatives.

Florida's untraditional approach to combating school shootings empowers their communities at every level. From counties and school districts to teachers and staff, everyone is offered a chance to take the initiative and participate in the securitization of their campuses. Whereas California's communities are provided limited resources and autonomy to actively pursue safer campuses. Schools in the City of Walnut Creek, for instance, recently suspended their School Resource Officer (SRO) program, making its K-12 campuses soft targets and more vulnerable to an active shooting.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Mass shootings in America are on the rise, and the rates of shootings on K-12 campuses are the highest ever recorded (K-12 School Shooting Database, 2023). California ranks historically high for school shootings ever recorded in the US (Gilligan & Lurye, 2023). As rates of mass shootings increase nationally, especially on K-12 campuses, federal, state, and local governments have taken different approaches to address this issue. For instance, California has prioritized mental health and gun control policies over hard security. Therefore, California's cities and schools are limited in what they can do to address campus security.

Moreover, the City of Walnut Creek's K-12 schools remain at significant risk of a mass shooting. In this, response to an active shooting is prolonged (P1), hardening schools by traditional means has become unfeasible (P2), and public confidence in campus security is low (P3).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The study aimed to explore how to make Walnut Creek's K-12 schools more resilient to active shooter emergencies. Further research has been conducted to determine how Florida's Guardian Program would impact emergency response time to active shootings, the feasibility of



hardening, and public confidence regarding K-12 school security in Walnut Creek. The study proves that elements of Florida's Guardian Program would make Walnut Creek's K-12 schools more resilient to active shooter emergencies.

### **Significance of the Study**

K-12 schools are integral in shaping society and securing these institutions should be of utmost priority. This study is significant because it marks a monumental shift in how K-12 schools strategize security. Moreover, it contrasts two fundamentally different strategies for addressing the increasing attacks on K-12 schools, i.e., radically hardening schools or focusing on mental health, restorative justice, and even defunding school security budgets. It may take an untraditional method of security to restore confidence and ensure the resilience of K-12 campus safety. Through this study, policymakers and decision-makers in California and Walnut Creek will know how to improve their K-12 school security strategies.

### **Research Question or Hypothesis**

The main research question is:

How could the implementation of Florida's Guardian Program in California benefit Walnut Creek's K-12 schools?

The sub-questions are:

1. How would Florida's Guardian Program shorten the duration of mass shooting events in Walnut Creek's K-12 schools?
2. How would Florida's Guardian Program increase the feasibility of hardening Walnut Creek's K-12 school security?
3. How would Florida's Guardian Program boost public confidence in Walnut Creek's K-12 school security?

## **Theory of Change and Assumptions**

This study applies the 1/3 formula, which means, one independent variable, Florida's Guardian Program, and three dependent variables: response times to active shooter emergencies on Walnut Creek's K-12 campuses, the feasibility of hardening on Walnut Creek's K-12 campuses, and public confidence in security on Walnut Creek's K-12 campuses.

The theory of change for this research study is: If California implemented Florida's Guardian Program, then emergency response time in Walnut Creek's K-12 schools would increase, then hardening Walnut Creek's K-12 schools would be more feasible, and then public confidence in Walnut Creek's K-12 schools will increase. Based on the theory of change presented, I make the following assumptions using the 1/3 formula:

Independent variable: If California implemented Florida's Guardian Program:

Assumption 1(A1): Then, emergency response time in Walnut Creek's K-12 schools would increase.

Assumption 2 (A2): Then, hardening Walnut Creek's K-12 schools would be more feasible.

Assumption 3: (A3): Then, public confidence in Walnut Creek's K-12 schools will increase.

## **Limitations**

A limitation of the research will be the need for more current research and data to precisely reflect the Florida Guardian Program's effect since its implementation. Since the program is relatively new, more data is needed to draw connections to the research assumptions. Furthermore, this research is limited to the City of Walnut Creek, one of California's 482 Cities, comprising only 70 thousand of California's 39 million people (US Census Bureau, 2022). The

research will only serve as a small sample size of the possible impact if California implements Florida's Guardian Program. In addition, more time and resources are needed to conduct thorough research to substantiate the results of initial conclusions. To gain a better understanding of the effects that the Guardian Program would have on the dependent variables, this study will include more significant and diverse selection pools.

### **Operational Definitions**

In order to ease up the readability of this research's key terminologies, I have developed the operational definitions of key terms used in this study, which serve the purpose of enhancing the comprehension of the reader.

- ***Florida's Guardian Program:*** For this study, the Florida Guardian program refers to Florida's policy of allowing K-12 school districts to hire armed guards and permit teachers and staff to carry a firearm on campus.
- ***K-12 schools:*** For this study, K-12 schools refer to any public school between the grades of preschool and high school.
- ***Mass shooting event or active shooting:*** For this study, a mass shooting or active shooting refers to an event in which an individual is actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people with a firearm.
- ***School Resource Officer:*** For this study, a School Resource Officer (SRO) is a sworn law enforcement officer whose jurisdiction includes the K-12 school campus.
- ***Hardening:*** For this study, hardening refers to the fortification of infrastructure and resources for K-12 campus security. In particular, the implementation of armed guards, teachers, and staff, sanctioned by Florida's Guardian Program.

- ***Emergency response time:*** For this study, emergency response time refers to the time it takes for an official, whether it be law enforcement or a sanctioned guardian, to actively pursue, engage, or neutralize an active shooter on a K-12 campus. Furthermore, the study will contrast the average response time on K-12 campuses with that which is implemented in Florida's Guardian Program.
- ***Feasibility:*** For this study, feasibility refers to the costs of hardening K-12 campuses compared to the implementation of the Florida Guardian Program. The study seeks to prove that the Florida Guardian Program would be less costly than providing law enforcement officers on each campus.
- ***Public confidence:*** For this study, public confidence refers to the level of confidence students, parents, teachers of K-12 schools, and the public have in their school's resiliency to an active shooter emergency. The study seeks to contrast public confidence in a school without Florida Guardian Program-sanctioned guardians with those that would.

### **Expected Impact of the Research**

This study will identify the benefits that Florida's Guardian Program has on public safety in California. Moreover, it shows how Florida's Guardian Program would impact Walnut Creek's K-12 school's security. Specifically, how it affects a school's response time to an active shooter emergency, the feasibility of hardening schools, and the ability to boost public confidence.

### **Summary**

America's K-12 schools are more vulnerable today than ever before. Deranged individuals with the intent to harm indiscriminately are preying on soft targets such as schools. Florida is one of few states in the country to take an untraditional approach to school safety. Florida's model directly contrasts with California's policies and priorities. The Florida Guardian

Program addresses three core components of campus security: response time, feasibility, and public confidence. This study analyzed the impact of Florida's Guardian Program on K-12 school security. Moreover, this study finds that if implemented, Florida's Guardian Program would address the three core components of campus security and make schools more resilient to mass shootings.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **Introduction**

An extensive search was conducted for scholarly and peer-reviewed articles, journals, and studies published regarding Florida's Guardian Program, school shootings, California, Contra Costa County, and Walnut Creek school safety measures. Including analysis on the three primary themes associated with the research questions, that is: response time, feasibility of hardening schools, and public confidence. The following is a summary of the key points of the relevant information found about this study.

### **What is Florida's Guardian Program?**

In February 2018, a gunman opened fire in Florida's Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, killing 17 people and wounding 17 more in what had become the deadliest school shooting in American history (History.com, 2019). In the aftermath of the Parkland shooting, Florida enacted an omnibus bill, the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act (MSDGPSA), which contained mental health, gun, and school safety initiatives. Among the host of initiatives was the Chris Hixon, Coach Aaron Feis, and Coach Scott Beigel Guardian Program, aka the Guardian Program.

The Guardian Program serves as a conservative solution to address the rise in mass shootings in schools across America. It provides resources for schools, districts, and county sheriff's offices throughout Florida to harden school security and allows districts to hire more affordable armed guards for campuses or include arming staff and teachers (LaGrone, 2023). The program supplemented a preexisting law requiring an armed person to guard every public and charter school in the state (McLean, 2023).

The Guardian Program (2018) appropriates funds from the State's General Revenue Fund to Florida's Department of Education to incentivize participation in the program, including \$500,000 in reoccurring funds to sheriff's departments. In addition, the state provides a \$500 stipend to individuals who volunteer in the program. The program mandates minimum training requirements, such as a 144-hour training program, including 12 hours of nationally recognized diversity training and 132 hours of firearm safety training conducted by Criminal Justice Standards and Training Commission-certified instructors (Florida Dept. of Education, 2019). Local sheriff departments are allowed to expand these requirements but not minimize them.

The Guardian Program establishes clear and concise roles and responsibilities. A local school board must vote to implement the program. If the school board votes to implement it, the sheriff in that county must provide training directly or through a contract with another sheriff's office that has established the program. If the sheriff of that county refuses, the board may circumvent that decision and contract directly with a sheriff in a different county. The program notably designates primary responsibility to locally elected officials while establishing minimum standards by law and boilerplate provisions, enforceable by the State's Department of Education (FDOE).

The law (SB207, 2018) established Florida's first-ever Office of Safe Schools and made it the chief program manager within the state's Department of Education. It states, "The office shall serve as a central repository for best practices, training standards, and compliance oversight..." In addition, each district is responsible for designating a school safety specialist to oversee safety and security. In implementing the Program, FDOE requires each district to report to the state's Office of Safe Schools within 72 hours if a safe-school officer, including guardians,

engages in misconduct (LaGorone, 2023). The FDOE reports that since 2020, 100 reports have been filed (LaGrone, 2023).

### **What are the Impacts and Benefits of Florida's Guardian Program?**

Since implementation, 49 Florida Counties have implemented school guardians, comprising over half the districts in the state (LaGrone, 2023), and training over 1,000 school employees (Swearer, 2023). Districts participating in the program perceive an absence of active shooting events as a sign of success. When asked in an interview with *ABC Action News Tampa Bay*, Pinellas County Sheriff Bob Gualtieri asserted, “Well, how many mass casualties or active assailant events have we had at a school since Stoneman Douglas? None” (LaGrone, 2023).

In defense of the Guardian Program, Hillsborough Police Chief John Newman explained, “The genius in the Guardian Program is whether you’re a real small county or an extra-large county like Hillsborough County, you can take the definition and apply it to your resources and your finances and implement something that works for your district” (LaGrone, 2023). Yet, there is still very little data to determine the efficacy of Florida’s Guardian Program. However, there have been no major incidents following the implementation of these policies. As Chief Newman suggested, the absence of a bad event is a success. However, several quantitative and qualitative implications may be measured, i.e., emergency response time, feasibility, and public perception and confidence.

### **Parkland Commission Findings**

Among the significant policies set out in the MSDGSPSA was the creation of the Marjory Stoney Douglas High School Public Safety Commission, which produced its initial report (2019) on the faults exhibited in the shooting in 2019. The report presented a scathing review of the protocols and processes leading up to and during the incident. It included various



recommendations, one of which was to expand the Guardian Program mandate to teachers who were previously prohibited from participating.

### **Theme I: Response Time**

The FBI (2023) found that of 51 cases, the median response time of police to an active shooter emergency was three minutes. The DHS further found that the average school shooting lasts an average of 12.5 minutes before being resolved, and the average police response time for this situation is 18 minutes (Kim, 2020). Worse, half of all active shooter events end before law enforcement arrives on the scene (Gingras et al., 2023). The longer the incident, the more lethal the attack. Consequently, response time can correlate to the damage incurred by a mass shooting.

Regarding school shootings, data suggests that teachers and faculty have the most significant impact on the duration of a shooting. According to an FBI study of active shooter events from 2000-2013, 39 incidents occurred in educational environments (27 schools, 12 IHEs) in which 117 individuals were killed and 120 were wounded (FBI, 2013). Of the 27 school incidents, two occurred during school board meetings, 14 happened in a high school, six occurred in a middle or junior high school, four occurred in an elementary school, and one happened at a school including grades PreK-12. Additionally, the study found that 90 (56.3%) of 160 mass shootings ended on the shooter's initiative. Around 21 (13.1%) incidents ended after unarmed citizens safely and successfully restrained the shooter, 11 of which involved unarmed principals, teachers, other school staff, and students. Five (3.1%) ended after armed individuals who were not law enforcement personnel exchanged gunfire with the shooters. This research demonstrates the vital role that civilians and schoolteachers, and faculty have in responding to active shootings.

In waiting for first responders, targets of mass violence have been trained and practiced the Run, Hide, or Fight method. An FBI training video simulating an active shooter emergency instructs people to do the following in the event of an active shooter event: (Run) Quickly and cautiously evacuate in the direction away from the attacker; (Hide) If there is no safe escape route, find a good hiding place; (Fight) Only as a last resort and use available objects as improvised weapons (FBI, 2023). However, law enforcement and security strategists recognize a shift from this strategy. Franklin County, Ohio, has adopted a change in the plan, replacing it with “avoid, deny, defense.” This replaces the ‘hiding’ tactic with a nuanced approach, i.e., creating distance, barriers, etc. (Gingras, et al., 2023).

Public action precedes the materialization of this strategic shift. Heroes have constantly emerged in mass attacks. For instance, during the Parkland Shooting, Coach Aaron Feis “draped himself over [two] students acting as a human shield” (Chuck, 2018). Despite the heroic efforts of the victims who chose to engage with the gunman, they remain at a considerable disadvantage. By being severely under-armed, counterassaults stand little chance of being successful. Another example is the San Bernadino shooting of 2015, in which two armed attackers targeted a work event, killing 14 people and injuring 24 others. Amid the chaos of the shooting, three men attempted to stop the shooter by conducting a weaponless counterassault on one of the gunmen. The counterattack failed and all three were shot.

*Police Magazine* published four recommendations for reducing damage by an active shooter (Murgado, 2013): Harden the target; Train and arm those you’re responsible for protecting; Build and strengthen prevention programs, as well as proactive suspect identification; and improve first responder response times. Three of the four recommendations, as mentioned

above, suggest investments and resources be allocated to enhance the readiness of the target, while only one lays responsibility on the first responders.

Hardening schools and arming faculty existed for decades before Florida's Guardian Program, but until 2018, it had never been implemented on such a comprehensive and institutional-wide basis. Florida's Guardian Program creates partnerships between state and local governments. It empowers local governments to make decisions that best fit the needs of their counties while providing financial support. Moreover, it involves extensive training and intensive data collection, which can be used to influence future policy decisions.

## **Theme II: Feasibility of Hardening Schools**

*Time International* (2022) questions the efficacy of school hardening. It reports that before the Parkland and Uvalde shootings in 2017, the market for school-security equipment and services reached \$2.7 billion. This market included new technologies, security infrastructure, and the stationing of local police, known as School Resource Officers (SROs). It's estimated that an SRO can cost a school more than \$97,000 annually (Hill, 2013). However, up to this point, most schools nationwide have yet to consider hiring private security or arming school faculty, which is a much more feasible option.

Recently, more states have been open to the idea of allowing armed staff on campus to provide extra security. The *Rand Corporation* (2022) reports that of January 2021 28 states have allowed schools to arm teachers or staff. Similarly, Florida's Guardian Program allows districts and schools the flexibility and feasibility to fit the school's needs. Not to mention, it includes extra financial support from the state if districts do decide to participate in the program.

### **Theme III: Public Confidence**

Support for arming teachers among educators nationally appears bleak. According to a national survey of educators conducted by *EdWeek Research Center*, when asked if “Arming a select group of teachers would make schools safer,” 70 percent responded “No” (Blad, 2022)—respondents who supported the idea either identified as Republicans or who personally owned guns, or both. A similar poll conducted by the *Pew Research Center* found that 43 percent of respondents favored allowing K-12 teachers and school officials to carry firearms (Green, 2021). However, these national polls do not account for the public opinion of parents, teachers, and students in schools and districts that have implemented Guardian Program-like programs. Furthermore, according to a poll conducted by *PDK International* (2022), support for arming staff and teachers rose to a 50-50 split when a minimum of 80 hours of training was required, which the Guardian Program dramatically surpassed.

### **What elements are lacking in California’s Communities?**

#### **California**

California leads the nation in school shootings, followed by Texas and then Illinois (Gilligan & Lurye, 2023). The state accounts for roughly 20 percent of the nation’s mass shootings since 2012 (Swearer, 2023). The state does not have a comprehensive school safety plan other than a law signed in 2018 that mandates schools develop and maintain individual plans.

To stem the increasing threat of school shootings, California has focused its efforts on gun control and mental health. In a statement marking the fifth anniversary of the Parkland School Shooting, Secretary Nancy Ward of the Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) released a statement saying, “California is leading, not with words, but with actions to protect our

communities” (Ward, 2023). The Secretary highlighted California’s most prominent gun laws: temporary gun violence restraining orders, universal background checks, mental health reporting, age restrictions, a 10-day waiting period, and assault weapons bans.

### **Contra Costa County**

Contra Costa is one of California’s 58 counties. It consists of 16 school districts but has made minimal effort to harden schools amidst the rise of school shootings. West Contra Costa Unified School District is just one example of a school that is vulnerable to gun violence in Contra Costa County. According to one study, “41% of the 2,300 shots fired in the city [of Richmond] over the past decade happened within a half-mile, or about a 10-minute walk, of one of the city’s 33 K-12 public schools.” Recently, WCCUSD has followed California’s lead, and instead of focusing on hardening their schools, the district has pursued mental health and restorative justice initiatives. In June 2020, WCCUSD cut funding for SROs, effectively removing police from campuses and leaving them vulnerable to violent attacks (Aldax, 2022). Most other Contra Costa County districts have followed suit.

Similarly, in 2020, the City of Antioch, in Contra Costa County, rejected federal grant money that would have partially paid for putting SROs on school campuses (Prieve, 2020). With the grant, \$750,000 from the US Department of Justice COPS Hiring Program would have acquired six SROs for Contra Costa County school districts. Cost was a factor in deciding not to apply for the grant. The program would have cost the city over \$2 million. Contra Costa lacks the discipline and fiscal capacity to implement traditional school security measures. Florida’s Guardian Program would not only feasibly harden schools that are increasingly vulnerable to attack, but it would also increase response time to active emergencies and boost public confidence in school security throughout California’s counties, including Contra Costa.

## **Walnut Creek**

The City of Walnut Creek is comprised of 24 public and private K-12 schools. Few, if any, of its K-12 schools have an armed guard on campuses in part because of high costs and the public sentiment surrounding law enforcement in recent years. Many schools have followed California's lead and have elected to suspend their SRO programs and divert funds to mental health and campus counseling services. By suspending their SRO programs, Walnut Creek's K-12 schools have become soft targets and more vulnerable to active shootings.

Despite lower crime rates than the national average and other cities in Contra Costa County (City-Data.com, 2020), Walnut Creek schools are no safer from active shootings than other schools. The motives that lead to school shootings remain too unknown to correlate the probability of attack with crime rates. In April 2023, Northgate High School experienced an attack that exhibited similar characteristics of an active shooting. In this incident, the assailant used a knife, and the attack was directed towards just one individual. However, the attack took place on a campus where there was no armed security or law enforcement and was resolved by a vice-principal who happened to be on his scheduled campus perimeter patrol (Stone, 2023). The incident proves how vulnerable Walnut Creek's K-12 campuses are to attack. If the attacker's means and motives were slightly altered, he could have caused worse damage.

Walnut Creek must be proactive in securing their K-12 campuses. If led by Florida's Guardian Program, the city's schools would become more resilient to mass shootings. Moreover, Walnut Creek's K-12 schools' response times to active shootings would increase, hardening their campuses would become more feasible, and public confidence in their schools' security would improve.

## **Summary**

Florida's Guardian Program is an untraditional approach to school security. While many states across the US have implemented some form of school hardening strategy, none have simultaneously addressed the three core components considered in this paper of response time, feasibility, and public confidence. The Guardian Program was instantaneously popular among counties and school districts throughout the state and continues to expand. California's K-12 school security strategy is rather bleak in comparison. While the Guardian Program directs investments into hardening campuses, California has diverted investment away from hardening campuses and towards mental health and restorative justice programs, among other priorities. The City of Walnut Creek is just one of California's cities that's K-12 schools would benefit from element of Florida's Guardian Program.

## **Chapter 3: Research Methodology**

### **Introduction**

The research utilized the Mixed-Methods Research (MMR) approach. Quantitative and qualitative data were used to determine the assumed changes that the independent variable(s) will have on the dependent variables. This study gauges the effectiveness of the Florida Guardian Program on Walnut Creek's K-12 schools if implemented. The study was designed to acquire input from a broad pool of participants, not limited to their involvement in Walnut Creek K-12 schools. In conducting the study, it was critical to garner as much internal and external validity as possible to limit the ambiguity of the research. The ultimate objective was to collect substantial data to back up the study's assumptions.

### **Main Research Question**

The main research question is:

How could the implementation of Florida's Guardian Program in California benefit Walnut Creek's K-12 schools?

The sub-questions are:

1. How would Florida's Guardian Program reduce mass shooting events in Walnut Creek's K-12 schools?
2. How would Florida's Guardian Program increase the feasibility of hardening Walnut Creek's K-12 school security?
3. How would Florida's Guardian Program boost public confidence in Walnut Creek's K-12 school security?



## Theory of Change Assumptions

The theory of change for this research study is: if California implemented Florida's Guardian Program, then emergency response time in Walnut Creek's K-12 schools would increase, then hardening Walnut Creek's K-12 schools would be more feasible, and then public confidence in Walnut Creek's K-12 schools will increase. Based on the theory of change presented, I make the following assumptions using the 1/3 formula:

Independent variable: If California implemented Florida's Guardian Program:

Assumption 1(A1): Then, emergency response time in Walnut Creek's K-12 schools would increase.

Assumption 2 (A2): Then, hardening Walnut Creek's K-12 schools would be more feasible.

Assumption 3: (A3): Then, public confidence in Walnut Creek's K-12 schools will increase.

## Operational Definitions

There is one independent variable in this study, which is Florida's Guardian Program. The three dependent variables are response times to active shooter emergencies on Walnut Creek's K-12 campuses, the feasibility of hardening on Walnut Creek's K-12 campuses, and public confidence in security on Walnut Creek's K-12 campuses. To ensure the research is relevant and reliable, the following terms have been operationally defined:

- ***Florida's Guardian Program:*** For this study, the Florida Guardian program refers to Florida's policy of allowing K-12 school districts to hire armed guards and permit teachers and staff to carry a firearm on campus.

- ***K-12 schools:*** For this study, K-12 schools refer to any public school between the grades of preschool and high school.
- ***Mass shooting event or active shooting:*** For this study, a mass shooting or active shooting refers to an event in which an individual is actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people with a firearm.
- ***School Resource Officer:*** For this study, a School Resource Officer (SRO) is a sworn law enforcement officer whose jurisdiction includes the K-12 school campus.
- ***Hardening:*** For this study, hardening refers to the fortification of infrastructure and resources for K-12 campus security. In particular, the implementation of armed guards, teachers, and staff, sanctioned by Florida's Guardian Program.
- ***Emergency response time:*** For this study, emergency response time refers to the time it takes for an official, whether it be law enforcement or a sanctioned guardian, to actively pursue, engage, or neutralize an active shooter on a K-12 campus. Furthermore, the study will contrast the average response time on K-12 campuses that is implemented in Florida's Guardian Program.
- ***Feasibility:*** For this study, feasibility refers to the costs of hardening K-12 campuses compared to the implementation of the Florida Guardian Program. The study seeks to prove that the Florida Guardian Program would be less costly than providing law enforcement officers on each campus.
- ***Public confidence:*** For this study, public confidence refers to the level of confidence students, parents, teachers of K-12 schools, and the public have in their school's resiliency to an active shooter emergency. The study seeks to contrast public confidence in a school without Florida Guardian Program-sanctioned guardians with those that would.

## **Population Sampling Strategy and Procedure**

To capture the input of Walnut Creek residents, I used the Mixed-Methods Research (MMR) approach by conducting a combination of interviews and surveys to collect data. Surveys were open to the public and sorted by geography and relation to Walnut Creek K-12 Schools. For example, each participant provided the city they live in and whether or not they work for, attend, or have a child, grandchild, etc., who attended a Walnut Creek K-12 school. In addition, I interviewed parents, students, and teachers attending Walnut Creek schools. Also, I surveyed and interviewed public officials, including a police officer, high-level city and district officials, as well as a teacher, an administrator, and parents. Utilizing a database to manage my research, I administered 62 surveys to Walnut Creek and Contra Costa County residents and conducted five substantive interviews. The interview and survey instruments can be viewed in the Appendix. The data from the surveys were collected from online questionnaires and in-person interviews. The surveys were deployed using “Google Surveys” distributed through various social media platforms, i.e., Facebook, Next Door Neighbor, LinkedIn, etc. Volunteer interviews were conducted in person and virtually with various members of the community. The goal was to have participants representing different demographics, i.e., K-12 students, parents, grandparents, teachers, police, etc.

## **Data Analysis**

Data was consolidated in spreadsheets upon collection for review. Furthermore, visual charts and graphs were tabulated to visualize and compare the data to support the findings. Both the surveys and interviews were categorized and organized by questions asked and responses given and deduced to assigned values for data collection. Ultimately, the data collected was used to determine if the initial assumptions of the research problem were valid.

## **Internal and External Validity**

The security landscape is constantly changing, and maturation threatens this study. The research took place at a specific time of year, when students were in school, with no predominant active shooter threats. The study acknowledged the role and impact public perceptions had on the data. Nevertheless, for the most part, the internal validity of the study remained uncompromised.

Furthermore, the study had to work on asserting external validity on a broader scale. External validity may only be found when data collected can be generalized to a group beyond those involved in the study (O'Sullivan et al., 2017). In this case, the study selection happened on a population, primarily Contra Costa County residents, that live by different policies, demographics, and experiences than the broader population of California and the rest of the United States. For a clearer picture and to increase the chances of external validity, the surveys and interviews should be conducted on a state and national level to be analyzed by location and demographic.

## **Limitations**

The scope of the study and the selection of the surveys and interviews created an exciting research dynamic. On the one hand, opening the survey to people within Contra Costa County gave the study greater external validity by gaining a broader perspective. On the other hand, every region had varying demographics, governments, and policies. These differences may have had a defining impact on the research. Therefore, it was necessary to sort out the relation of those taking the survey to Walnut Creek schools. Even more so, people's preconceptions, experiences, and party affiliations may have had an unseen effect on the data. However, in being a quasi-experiment, the study was limited in time, resources, and other control factors; it was impossible to tell what preconceptions, experiences, or party affiliations would have on the data.

## **Summary**

Current data on the Florida Guardian Program, or lack thereof, presented a challenge in discerning the success and implications it would have had throughout a state or in a city. Moreover, it is extremely difficult to depict the absence of an issue as success. Nevertheless, the assumptions of this study predicted that the program would have a positive impact on the safety and resilience of K-12 schools against an active shooting. In testing these assumptions, members of Contra Costa County and of K-12 schools in the City of Walnut Creek were selected to participate in a survey. Data was then collected, analyzed, and then compared to the assumptions.

## **Chapter 4: Results and Findings**

### **Introduction**

The research focused on K-12 school security amidst the rising threat of school shootings and how Florida's Guardian Program would impact Walnut Creek's K-12 school security. Specifically, how it would affect a school's response time to an active shooter emergency, the feasibility of hardening schools, and its impact on public confidence. The Mixed-Methods Research (MMR) approach was applied to conduct this study, in which, quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analyzed. This chapter provides research analysis and findings from surveys (quantitative) and Subject Matter Expert (SME) interviews (qualitative) conducted. A total of 62 individuals responded to the survey, which contained twelve questions comprising various data collection techniques, including Likert-scaling, true or false, and multiple-choice questions. These methods were used to gauge sentiment on statements ranging from strong agreement to strong disagreement and to contrast the different methodologies with the research assumptions.

Furthermore, five SME interviews were conducted. The SME interviews comprised ten open-ended questions to gauge sentiment about the topic. The interviews included yes or no questions, during which time SMEs were provided with the opportunity to expand on their answers. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and ranked to quantify the data. SMEs included a high-ranking Walnut Creek City official "SME #1", a CSU Campus Police Chief "SME #2", an elected school board member and parent in Walnut Creek "SME #3", a K-12 schoolteacher and coach in the city of Walnut Creek "SME #4", and a high school administrator in the city of Walnut Creek "SME #5". The data collected was used to verify and challenge the assumptions made through the Theory of Change from the previous chapters.

The surveys and interviews contained questions addressing the three areas of interest: a) response time to an active shooting at a K-12 school, b) the feasibility of hardening K-12 school campuses, and c) public confidence in a K-12 school's ability to respond to an active shooting. The following is a comprehensive analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data derived from the study. Each assumption is restated with corresponding data analysis described in the subsequent paragraphs.

### **Assumption 1 (A1)**

If California implemented Florida's Guardian Program, then emergency response time in Walnut Creek's K-12 schools would increase.

### **Quantitative Results**

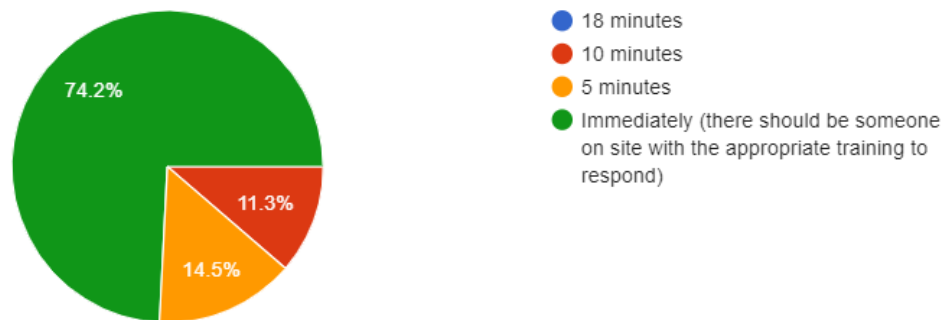
For assumption ONE, the survey contained four questions (1, 6, 7, & 9) addressing local K-12 school emergency response times. Question 9 noted the average mass shooting lasts about twelve minutes and asked the respondents what they believed was an acceptable response time. Most respondents said an immediate response was most acceptable, and all said a maximum of ten minutes or less (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1***School Shooting Response Time – Assumption 1*

Question 9: The Department of Homeland Security found that school shootings last an average of 12.5 minutes before being resolved and the average police response time for this situation is 18 minutes.

What is an acceptable response time to a mass shooting at a K-12 school?

62 responses



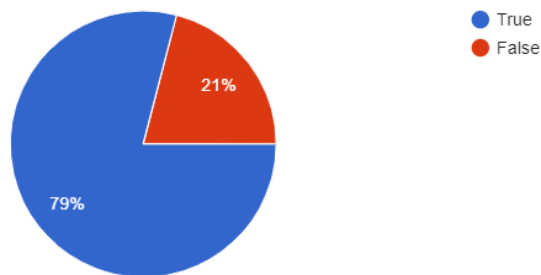
The data associated with Question 7 shows that most respondents believed that the longer the mass shooting event, the more lethal the attack (see Figure 2) and that per Question 6, the presence of more firearms-trained security would increase the response time to a mass shooting (see Figure 3).



**Figure 2***School Shooting Response Time – Assumption 1*

Question 7: The longer the mass shooting event, the more lethal the attack.

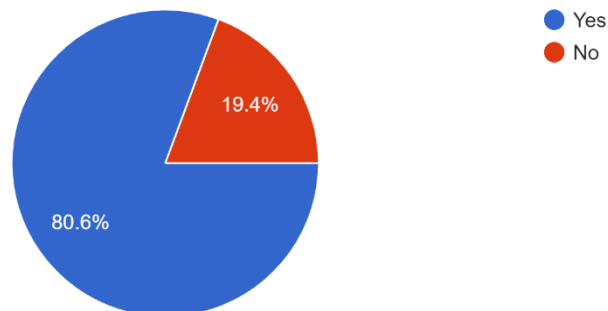
62 responses

**Figure 3***School Shooting Response Time – Assumption 1*

Question 6: Do you think the presence of more firearms-trained security would improve the response time to a mass shooting?

Do you think the presence of more firearms-trained security would improve the response time to a mass shooting?

62 responses



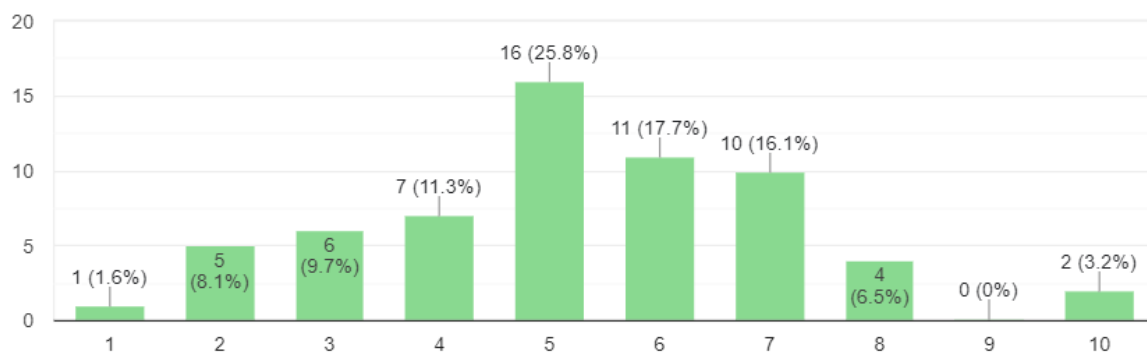
When asked in Question 1 to rank how confident the respondents were in their local K-12 school's response time in the event of an active shooting, just over 50% ranked five or less out of ten (see Figure 4).

**Figure 4**

#### School Shooting Response Time – Assumption 1

Question 1: Rank how confident are you in your (local) K-12 school's response time in the event of an active shooting.

62 responses



### Qualitative Data Analysis and Results

The interviews had two questions (3 and 6) addressing local K-12 school emergency response times. On the issue of response times, the SMEs were asked whether the length of time of a mass shooting event had any correlation to the fatality of the event. The SMEs generally agreed that the longer the mass shooting event, the more fatal it becomes. To follow up, SMEs were asked how the Guardian Program would impact the response time of a mass shooting on campus. SMEs #1, #2, #4, and #5 acknowledged that a Guardian Program would result in a quicker response time. SME #2 said with certainty, “You would reduce response times.” SME #2

added that “The only added value of that [Guardians on K-12 campuses] is the greater potential to reduce threat response.” However, Informant #3 found it difficult to say whether response time would decrease, citing, “You will need a full police response anyway.” Further, the SMEs expressed concern that while the Guardian Program might decrease response time, it would not be without its risks.

## **Findings**

The quantitative and qualitative data verified and validated the research assumption (A1). The survey results demonstrated that the public believed elements that make up the Guardian Program would result in more immediate responses to an active shooter event on a K-12 school campus. Likewise, the SMEs generally believed that despite the associated risks, the Guardian Program would produce a quicker response to an active shooter event on a K-12 school campus.

## **Assumption 2 (A2)**

If California implemented Florida’s Guardian Program, then hardening Walnut Creek’s K-12 schools would be more feasible.

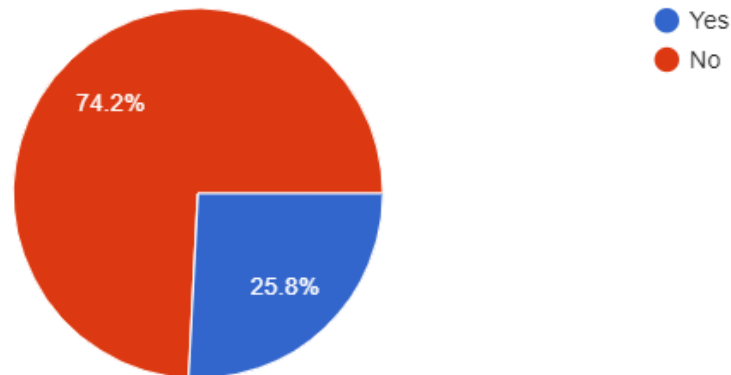
## **Quantitative Results**

To support the assumption TWO, the survey contained three questions (4, 8, & 10) addressing K-12 school hardening. When asked in Question 4 whether their local K-12 school invested enough money and resources in their campus’ security programs, most respondents stated “no” (see Figure 5).

**Figure 5***Feasibility of Hardening Schools - Assumption 2*

Question 4: Do you believe your (local) K-12 schools invest enough money and resources in their campus' security programs?

62 responses



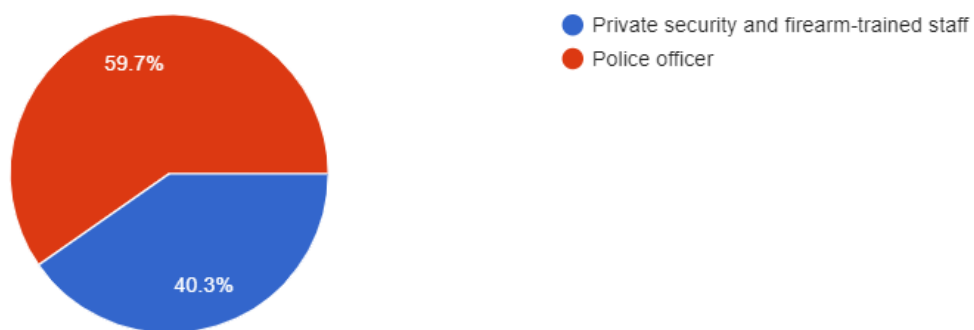
Question 8 of the survey compared two forms of hard security: police officers or private security, and firearms-trained staff. A slim majority of respondents found that police officers would be more financially responsible than private security (see Figure 6). This data neither supported or negated assumption two (A2). The question needed to be adequately phrased to eliminate subjective perspectives. Rather than determine whether the Guardian Program would be cheaper, respondents may have felt compelled to compare the program's efficacy.

**Figure 6***Feasibility of Hardening Schools – Assumption 2*

Question 8: Planning for a catastrophic event is difficult and high costs are the leading concern over school safety budgets.

In your opinion would it be more fiscally responsible to contract out private security and allow firearm-trained staff to carry on campus rather or hire police officers for campus security?

62 responses

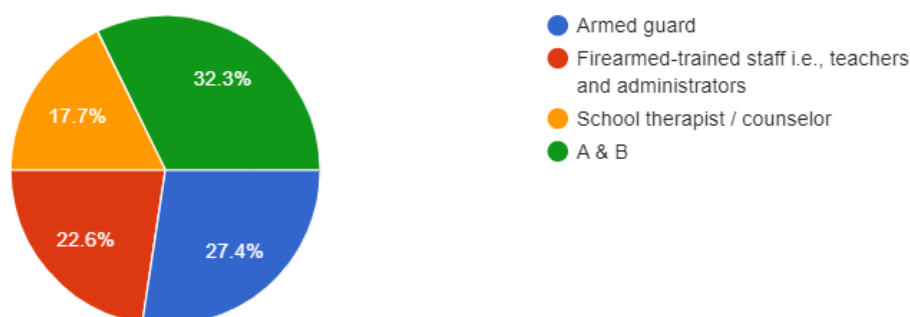


When asked in Question 10, what spending priority would have the most immediate impact on active shooter emergencies, armed guards, firearms-trained staff, or a school therapist, most respondents said armed guards (see Figure 7). The significance of this data was that a vast majority of respondents believed that armed guards and firearms-trained staff would have more immediate impact on a mass shooting event than soft-security, i.e., school therapists and counselors.

**Figure 7***Feasibility of Hardening Schools – Assumption 2*

Question 10: What spending priority do you think will have the most immediate impact on an active-shooter emergency?

62 responses



## Qualitative Data Analysis and Results

The interviews contained three questions (2, 7, & 8) addressing K-12 school hardening. The SMEs were split on whether the Guardian Program would be more financially responsible than alternative methods of hardening schools. The discussion of feasibility was subjective and begged the question: Is the Guardian Program feasible compared to what? While the nature of this question remained highly subjective, enough data was collected to corroborate the assumption (A2) and develop a recommendation in the pursuing chapter.

SME #1 offered a critical perspective on the fiscal implications of the Guardian Program. While the Guardian Program may be less costly in terms of dollar amount. It is critical to consider where the funding comes from. In the case of Walnut Creek, the SRO program would be funded primarily by the city, whereas the Guardian Program would be from the districts and or counties, which in this case would be less feasible. SME #3 expressed similar concerns, citing that the district budget must be considered when implementing such comprehensive programs.

This is because the district must allocate to many different schools across the county, and money is spread out to several cities and unincorporated areas. Informant #2 found that the Guardian Program would be cheaper but questioned its effectiveness compared to alternative methods when determining its feasibility. SME #2 questioned whether Guardians would serve as a “true force multiplier.” In this, Informant #2 is drawing a comparison to the operational capabilities of the SRO with that of a potential Guardian, whether a school employee or private security; the incentive structure and training are less advanced than an SRO.

## **Findings**

The quantitative and qualitative data moderately challenged the research assumption (A2). The interviews and survey results suggested that hard-security investments have a more immediate impact than soft-security on an active-shooter emergency. However, the results also express that an SRO would be more fiscally responsible than private security and firearms-trained staff.

## **Assumption 3 (A3)**

If California implemented Florida’s Guardian Program, then public confidence in Walnut Creek’s K-12 schools would increase.

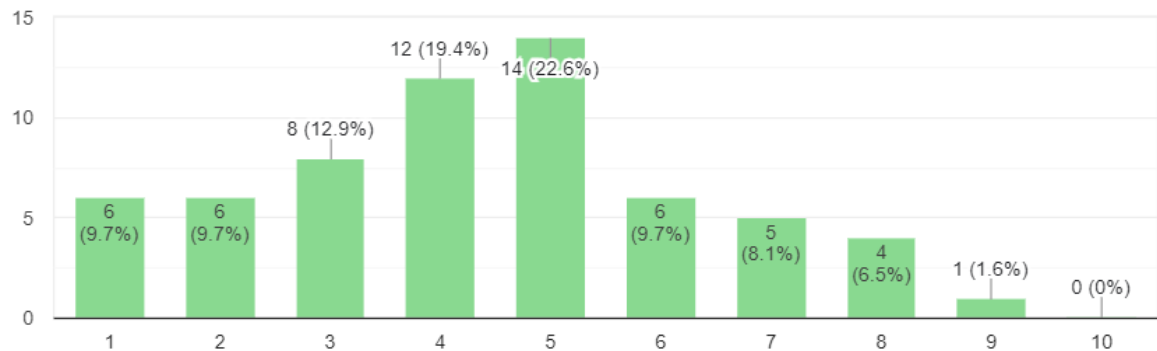
## **Quantitative Results**

The survey contained three questions (2, 3, & 5) addressing public confidence in local K-12 school security. When asked in Question two to rank how confident the respondents were in their local K-12 school’s security, the data overwhelmingly expressed a lack of confidence, with the majority of respondents citing “5” or less and no one selecting “9” or “10” (see Figure 8).

**Figure 8***Public Confidence in School Security- Assumption 3*

Question 2: Rank how confident are you in your (local) K-12 school's security.

62 responses



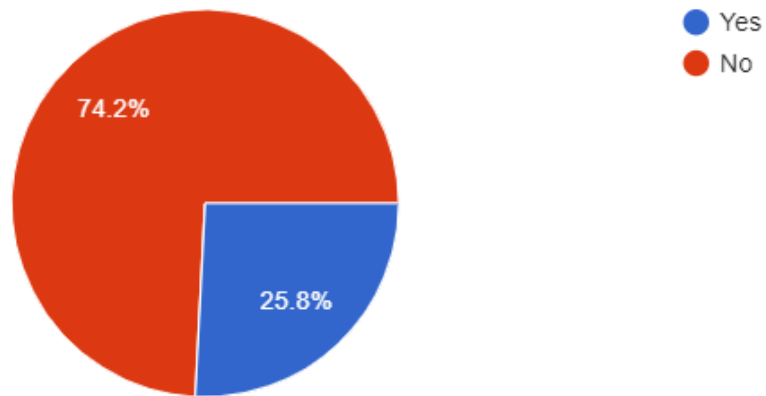
Further, when asked in Question 3 whether the respondents believed their local K-12 schools were doing enough to deter active shooter events, the respondents overwhelmingly selected “no” (see Figure 9). Nearly the same number of respondents stated in Question 5 that introducing security guards on their local K-12 school campus would “increase” their confidence in school security (see Figure 10).



**Figure 9***Public Confidence in School Security - Assumption 3*

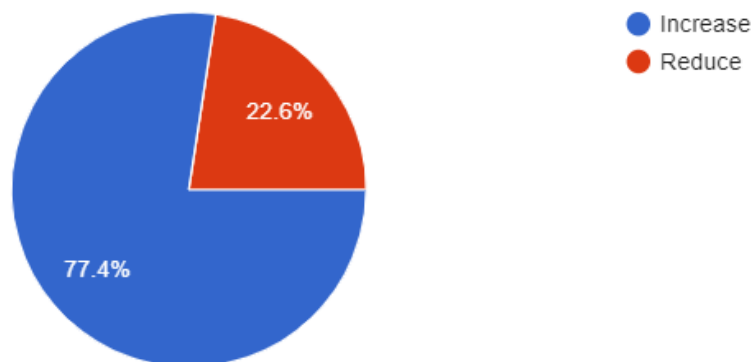
Question 3: Do you think your (local) K-12 schools are doing enough to deter active shooter events?

62 responses

**Figure 10***Public Confidence in School Security – Assumption 3*

Question 5: Would introducing security guards on your (local) K-12 school campuses increase your confidence or reduce your confidence in school security?

62 responses



More respondents believed that if a K-12 teacher or staff member wanted to volunteer for the guardian program, they should be permitted to (see Figure 11).

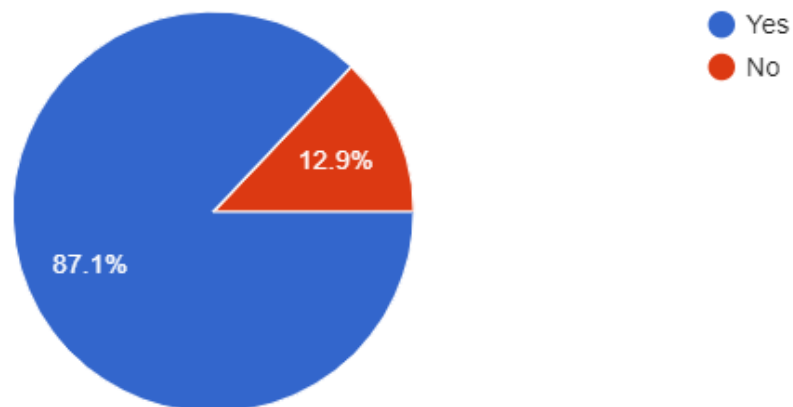
**Figure 11**

*Public Confidence in School Security – Assumption 3*

Question 12: Each of Florida's Guardian candidates must complete a 144-hour training program, pass a psychological evaluation, and submit and pass an initial drug test and subsequent random drug tests to become certified.

In your opinion, if a K-12 teacher or staff wants to volunteer for this training / certification should they be able to?

62 responses



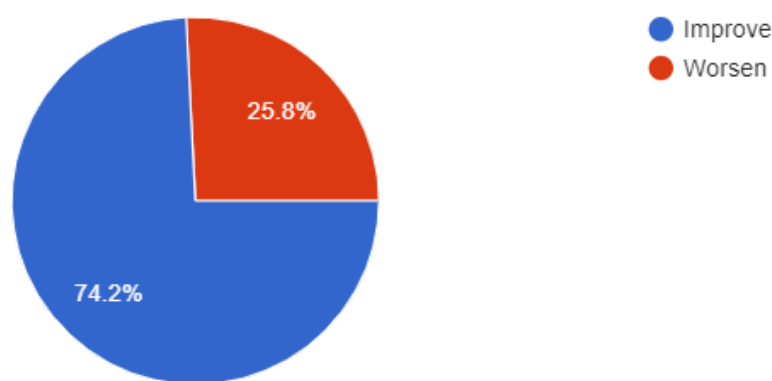
Finally, Question 11 asked pointedly whether or not responses would improve or worsen if volunteer teachers and staff were afforded more options to respond to active shooting events on a campus, a vast majority stated that responses would “improve” (see Figure 12).

**Figure 12***Public Confidence in School Security – Assumption 3*

Question 11: Recent tragedies at Parkland High School and Uvalde Elementary School both had police officers on campus, yet each failed to sufficiently respond to active shooter events.

In your opinion, do you think the response would improve or worsen if volunteer teachers and staff were afforded more options to respond to such an event.

62 responses



## Qualitative Results

The qualitative questionnaire contained two items (1 & 9) addressing public confidence in local K-12 school security. When asked, the SMEs expressed discontent with California's current handling of K-12 school safety. SME #1 noted room for improvement regarding Walnut Creek's K-12 school security, highlighting that the city recently suspended its SRO program, which ensured that each of its two public high schools had at least one police officer on every campus. In that, SME #1 stated, "You never know how successful it is something until you need it," alluding to a potential event such as an active shooting. Likewise, SME #5 stated, "if something happened [at the school SME #5 is an administrator], we would ask why we didn't do something different."

Similarly, the rest of the SMEs found that the State of California was not doing enough to ensure K-12 school security. SME #4 stated, “I would feel relieved if we had extra measures of protection,” citing a “lack of security on my particular campus [a high school in Walnut Creek].” While the SMEs communicated a current deficit of confidence in K-12 school security, they were all very skeptical of the Guardian Program and whether it would boost their confidence in school security.

The interviewees fell short of saying that a Guardian Program such as Florida’s would instill confidence in school safety, citing the risks associated with the policy. SME #1 highlighted the psychological aspects of the Guardian Program, insisting that teachers are prepared to teach, not act as gunmen. All informants expressed similar concerns, contributing to their lack of confidence. SME #2 responded, “The bar is where it is with police.” Further explaining that confidence would not increase because a Guardian’s incentive, skill, and training would not be that of police, SME #2’s preferred security method. SME #3 stated that arming teachers would put the whole school at great risk.

The lack of confidence in the Guardian Program was not regarding the effectiveness of the program, that is, in responding to a mass shooting, but for the risks associated with it, i.e., a student grabbing the firearm, a misfire, crossfire, mental health, etc. Nor did many informants express many qualms regarding private security, as they did about teachers’ participation in the program. SMEs #1 and #4 conceded that if the program were to be implemented, they would be more confident if it started small and then expanded, for example, starting with administrators in the office who are not in classrooms with students. Informant #4 felt similarly adding “I would trust private security and police officers’ way more [than teachers].”

## **Findings**

The quantitative and qualitative data moderately challenged the assumption (A3). While the quantitative data showed public confidence in the various components of the Guardian Program, qualitative data expressed reservations about permitting schoolteachers, those in the classroom with students, to possess a firearm on campus. Overall, the informants generally supported hard-security measures to secure K-12 school campuses and were even optimistic towards some components of the Guardian Program, i.e., arming campus administrators and security guards with additional training and safety precautions.

## **Summary**

The surveys and interviews provided critical data that generally supported the assumption that the Guardian Program would increase the resilience of a Walnut Creek K-12 school. The qualitative and quantitative data showed that there was a deep mistrust in K-12 school security in California and the City of Walnut Creek, specifically as it is related to an active shooter response. The qualitative data demonstrated that the public overwhelmingly wanted an immediate response to an active shooter event on K-12 campuses and that their local K-12 schools need to invest more in their security programs. The qualitative data also revealed that more needs to be done regarding K-12 school security. Both the quantitative and qualitative data expressed intrigue in hard-security methods, whether traditionally through the SRO program or untraditionally through the Guardian Program.

The qualitative data reflected that there were various risks associated with the implementation of the Guardian Program; but if implemented, the response time to an active shooter emergency would increase, feasibility would decrease, and public confidence would need to be established incrementally. Additionally, the qualitative data showed that the primary

concern was teachers carrying firearms, not private security guards, varying components of the Guardian Program. The quantitative data suggested that the public was more willing to allow teachers to carry firearms. Moreover, the quantitative data overwhelmingly supported the core assumptions. It showed that if implemented, the Guardian Program would decrease response time. It further showed that hard security such as the Guardian Program is a priority and would make an immediate impact over soft-security alternatives. Lastly, the quantitative data showed that public confidence would not decrease but would potentially increase if the Guardian Program were implemented. Overall, the data validated one of the proposed assumptions while moderately challenging two. While the feasibility of the Guardian Program remains uncertain, the data supported that if implemented, the Guardian Program would decrease response time to an active shooting event on a K-12 school campus, and the public is craving a program that can offer a more immediate response to active shooting.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusions, Recommendations, and Areas of Further Research**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to answer the main research question: How could the implementation of Florida's Guardian Program in California benefit Walnut Creek's K-12 schools? In addition to the main research question, the research attempted to address the following sub-questions:

1. How would Florida's Guardian Program shorten the duration of mass shooting events in Walnut Creek's K-12 schools?
2. How would Florida's Guardian Program increase the feasibility of hardening Walnut Creek's K-12 school security?
3. How would Florida's Guardian Program boost public confidence in Walnut Creek's K-12 school security?

This research evaluated the public's confidence in and opportunities for school security. The surveyed population and Subject Matter Expert (SME) interviews were conducted at various levels of the community, providing a broad but focused perspective on security at the local level. Data collected from the interviews and surveys contributed to the theory of change providing constructive feedback towards all three assumptions proposed at the beginning of the research. All input provided through the survey and interviews contributed to the Theory of Change, providing evident agreement for one of the assumptions while moderately challenging two, as discussed in the previous chapter. Although the study's main research was answered, further research is needed to sufficiently address its three sub-questions.

## Conclusions

This study applies the 1/3 formula, which means, one independent variable, Florida's Guardian Program, and three dependent variables: response times to active shooter emergencies on Walnut Creek's K-12 campuses, the feasibility of hardening on Walnut Creek's K-12 campuses, and public confidence in security on Walnut Creek's K-12 campuses.

**Assumption 1(A1):** THEN, emergency response time in Walnut Creek's K-12 schools would increase.

**Conclusion:** Assumption (A1) was validated by the quantitative and qualitative data results. The survey revealed that respondents believe the Guardian Program would decrease the response time to an active shooting on a K-12 School Campus. SME interviews showed that having guardians on school campuses would result in a more immediate response to an active shooting event. The longer the response time, the more fatal a mass shooting can become. An immediate response to a mass shooting involves having individuals who are adequately prepared and ready to respond on-site.

**Assumption 2 (A2):** Then, hardening Walnut Creek's K-12 schools would be more feasible.

**Conclusion:** Assumption (A2) was moderately challenged by the quantitative and qualitative data results. The survey revealed that respondents believed that it would be more fiscally responsible to station police officers on school campuses than hire private security or empower teachers and staff to carry firearms on campus. Respondents indicated, however, that hard-security investments would have more immediate effects on an active shooting event than alternative investments i.e., school therapists and counselors. Likewise, the qualitative data



suggested that hard security investments would have a more immediate impact amid an active shooter event.

**Assumption 3: (A3):** Then, public confidence in Walnut Creek's K-12 schools will increase.

**Conclusion:** Assumption (A3) was moderately challenged by the quantitative and qualitative data results. The quantitative data indicated that public confidence would increase if a program similar to the Florida Guardian Program were implemented. However, the quantitative data demonstrated concerns regarding the potential risks associated with the Guardian Program. However, despite the SME's reservations regarding the program, the data suggests that there is potential for incremental acceptance of the program. In other words, if the program were implemented incrementally, public confidence would increase depending on its results.

## **Recommendations**

### **Recommendation One**

Accounting for the quantitative and qualitative data collected through the research, there is an urgent need for Walnut Creek K-12 schools to implement heightened security measures. Walnut Creek's K-12 schools are soft targets, meaning they do not possess the capabilities to respond immediately to an active shooter event. In fact, Walnut Creek recently suspended its SRO program making its schools less safe and more vulnerable to attack. Walnut Creek should immediately prioritize its SRO program so to implement an SRO on at least every K-12 campus. Having an SRO at every K-12 school will harden those campuses and increase public confidence in their security.

### **Recommendation Two**

The presumptive verification of Assumption (A1) demonstrates that a program similar to that of Florida's Guardian Program would decrease the response time to an active shooter and would limit its impact. The City of Walnut Creek should work with state and local authorities to implement a program that incentivizes schools to hire armed security. Armed security would cost less overall than alternative hard-security measures such as hiring police. In addition, armed security would ensure a quicker response to an active shooter event. A city-wide initiative in collaboration with state authorities would increase confidence in school security.

### **Recommendation Three**

The quantitative data expressed optimism towards untraditional methods of hard security such as allowing teachers and administrators to carry firearms. Whereas the qualitative results suggested that public confidence must be earned incrementally regarding introducing firearms on K-12 campuses. Therefore, Walnut Creek may collaborate with state officials to develop a comprehensive program to implement elements of the Florida Guardian Program incrementally. The new program would permit administrators (those who are not in a classroom with kids), to be trained and allowed firearms on campus. Stringent rules and mechanisms in place would minimize the risks associated with the program. For example, administrators keep guns unloaded and in protected safe zones but restricted to minors and the public.

## SMART Recommendations

	<b>Recommendation 1</b>	<b>Recommendation 2</b>	<b>Recommendation 3</b>
<b><i>Specific</i></b>	The City of Walnut Creek may implement an SRO on every K-12 campus in the city.	The City of Walnut Creek may work with state and local authorities to implement a program that incentivizes schools to hire armed security.	Walnut Creek may collaborate with state officials to develop a comprehensive program to implement elements of the Florida Guardian Program incrementally.
<b><i>Measurable</i></b>	The City of Walnut Creek can collect data upon implementation to measure the effects of having a police officer stationed at every K-12 school.	The City of Walnut Creek can collect data upon implementation to measure the effects of having private security on the premises of K-12 schools.	The City of Walnut Creek can collect data upon implementation to measure the effects of having a firearm-trained administrator in K-12 schools.
<b><i>Achievable</i></b>	Hardening Walnut Creek K-12 schools to increase public confidence in school security.	More feasibly harden Walnut Creek K-12 schools by utilizing the private sector market.  Also, reducing response	More feasibly harden Walnut Creek K-12 schools through incentive programs.  Also, reducing response time to an active

		time to an active shooting event.	shooting event. Lastly, establish trust and incrementally increase confidence in untraditional hard-security methods.
<b><i>Relevant</i></b>	Directly supports assumption (A3).	Directly supports assumptions (A1) and (A2).	Directly supports assumptions (A1) (A2) and (A3).
<b><i>Time-bound</i></b>	Following the academic school year, the City of Walnut Creek will have collected a years' worth of data to analyze the program's effectiveness.	Following the academic school year, the City of Walnut Creek will have collected a year's worth of data to analyze the program's effectiveness.	Following the academic school year, the City of Walnut Creek will have collected a year's worth of data to analyze the program's effectiveness.

### **Areas of Further Research**

This capstone project focused on the implications of allowing K-12 schools to hire armed security and permit teachers and administrators to carry firearms on campus. The research demonstrated that public confidence in Walnut Creek over the issue of school security is low. The quantitative and qualitative data express concern over K-12 school security, especially considering average response times compared to the average duration of a school shooting. Survey respondents and SMEs expect lower response times, if not an immediate response to an

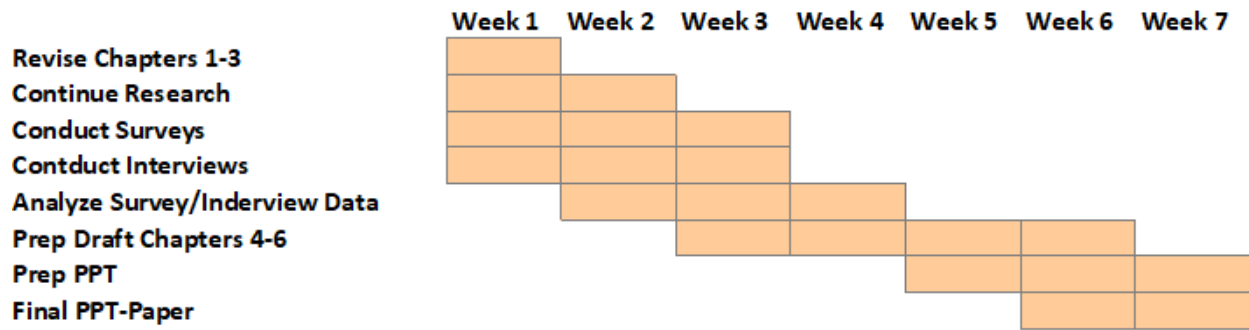
active shooting on the city's school campuses. However, despite the eagerness to decrease response time, the data shows that the public is skeptical of untraditional hard-security methods that would ensure more feasible and quicker response times. The SMEs also highlighted the risks associated with the Guardian Program. Further research should be conducted to assess the associated risks and their likely impact. Additionally, more research must still be conducted to assess the efficacy of untraditional security approaches. Florida's Guardian Program offers an excellent case study for further research.

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## Appendix A: Gantt Chart

**Guardian Program - EMPA 396 - Capstone Project****Activity**



## Appendix B: Data Collection Instruments

### Quantitative Survey Questionnaire

#### **Demographic Information**

Age (optional):

\*Zip code:

\*Relation to Walnut Creek K-12 School:

\_\_\_\_ Student

\_\_\_\_ Teacher

\_\_\_\_ Other (Please Describe)

\_\_\_\_ No relation

#### **Questions:**

1. Rank how confident are you in your (local) K-12 school's response time in event of an active shooting. (1 = Not at all confident -10 = Highly confident)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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2. Rank how confident you are in your (local) K-12 school's security. (1 = Not at all confident - 10 = Highly confident)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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3. Do you think your (local) K-12 schools are doing enough to deter mass shootings?

       Yes

       No

4. Do you believe your (local) K-12 schools invest enough money and resources in their campus's security program?

       Yes

       No

5. Would introducing security guards on your (local) K-12 school campuses increase your confidence or reduce your confidence in school security?

       Increase

       Reduce

6. Do you think the presence of more firearms-trained security would increase the response time to a mass shooting?

       Yes

       No

7. The longer the mass shooting event, the more lethal the attack.

       True

\_\_\_\_ False

8. Planning for a catastrophic event is difficult and high costs are the leading concern over school safety budgets. In your opinion would it be more fiscally responsible to contract out private security and allow firearm-trained staff to carry on campus rather or hire police officers for campus security?

\_\_\_\_ Private security and firearm-trained staff

\_\_\_\_ Police Officer

9. The Department of Homeland Security found that school shootings last an average of 12.5 minutes before being resolved and the average police response time for this situation is 18 minutes. What is an acceptable response time to a mass shooting at a K-12 school?\

\_\_\_\_ 18 minutes

\_\_\_\_ 10 minutes

\_\_\_\_ 5 minutes

\_\_\_\_ Immediately (there should be someone on site with appropriate training to respond)

10. What spending priority do you think will have the most immediate impact on an active-shooter emergency?

\_\_\_\_ An armed guard or firearm-trained staff.

\_\_\_\_ School counselor / therapist

\_\_\_\_ Police officer on campus full-time

\_\_\_\_ A&C

11. Recent tragedies at Parkland High School and Uvalde Elementary School both had police officers on campus, yet each failed to sufficiently respond to active shooter events. In your opinion, do you think the response would improve or worsen if volunteer teachers and staff were afforded more options to respond to such an event.

\_\_\_\_ Improve

\_\_\_\_ Worsen

12. Each of Florida's Guardian candidates must complete a 144-hour training program, pass a psychological evaluation, and submit and pass an initial drug test and subsequent random drug tests to become certified. In your opinion, if a K-12 teacher or staff wants to volunteer for this training / certification should they be able to?

\_\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_\_ No

## Qualitative Data Collection Instrument

### **Demographic Information**

Age (optional):

Relation to Walnut Creek K-12 School:

\_\_\_\_ Student

\_\_\_\_ Teacher

\_\_\_\_ Other (Please Describe)

### **Questions:**

1. The data shows that school shootings are on the rise in America. Why do you think that is? Follow up: Do you think local, state, and the federal governments are doing enough to combat this phenomenon?
2. Do you agree that the longer the mass shooting, the more lethal the attack?
3. The DHS further found that the average school shooting lasts an average of 12.5 minutes before being resolved and the average police response time for this situation is 18 minutes. What is an acceptable response time to a school shooting?
4. In the aftermath of the Parkland shooting in 2018, Florida implemented the Guardian Program, intended to harden school security, specifically by allowing its school districts to hire less-costly armed guards for campuses or include staff and teachers to be armed. From a professional perspective, what are your thoughts on this program?
5. California has taken a much different approach to K-12 campus security than Florida and many other states in the country. Rather than prioritize and invest in hardening school campuses, they have focused on mental health and restorative justice. Schools in the City of Walnut Creek have lost their School Resource Officers due in large part because of

budgeting concerns. What is your level of confidence in California's approach to this issue?

6. Do you think the presence of more firearms-trained security would increase the response time to a mass shooting?
7. Planning for a catastrophic event is difficult and high costs are the leading concern over school safety budgets. Do you think it would be more feasible to contract out private security and allow firearm-trained staff to carry on campus than to hire police officers?
8. What spending priority do you think would have the most immediate impact on an active shooter emergency?
9. Would introducing fire-arms trained security guards on K-12 school campuses boost your confidence in that school's ability to respond to a school shooting?
10. School faculty already have a certain level of responsibility for their students. If a member feels they are competent and willing to be trained and certified to carry a firearm on their campuses, should they be given a chance to do so?