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ARM TEACHERS; SAVE STUDENTS

After 10 years, Texas school leader stands firm for armed-staff model to protect pupils

By Mark Anderson

Sitting in his office at the Harrold Independent School District in rural north-central Texas, school superintendent David Thweatt half expected the phone to ring off the hook in the aftermath of yet another murder by gunfire at Santa Fe High School in Galveston County, Texas on May 18.

It's been 10 years now since Thweatt made headlines, nationally and internationally, by taking the lead in implementing a "controversial" school-protection plan that consists of training qualified teachers and staff to carry concealed firearms and maintain the crucial elements of uncertainty and surprise—to give any would-be school shooter reasons to think twice.

Of course, the success of such a program is mainly measured by sim-



ply noting that no one carrying a firearm with criminal intent has tried to enter or attack the district's school facilities since Harrold's school board approved Thweatt's defense plan.

Contacted by AFP, he said he was a tad puzzled that AFP was the first

and only media to have called him, as of May 21, regarding the events at Santa Fe's high school.

"I got some calls after Parkland [the Florida school shooting in February 2018] and after Sandy Hook [December 2012 in Connecticut], but not after this one; it's kind of weird," he said, believing that calls from media and officials from other school districts would be more likely since Santa Fe is in his home state.

Thweatt's school district, now also being implemented in some Florida school districts, when the use of a firearm for murder in a school setting was considerably less frequent than it is today—meaning that he's something of a pioneer in this area. While he's modest about his role, he's passionate about its purpose and effectiveness.

His views cut like a knife through the arguably flimsy suggestions for "roundtable discussions from all sides in the gun debate" and other politically correct measures called for by Texas Gov. Greg Abbott and most other officials. Only Texas Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick has been more specific, having recently said that the issue is "not about the guns, it's about us. . . . We have devalued life, whether it's through abortion, whether it's the breakup of families, through violent

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THE INSIDE SCOOP



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