

Teachers Get Baseball Bats to Confront Shooters in Pennsylvania District

A school district in Erie, Pa., has supplied teachers and other school employees with miniature baseball bats to use as a last resort if confronted with an active shooter.

“We don’t want to be sitting ducks,” William Hall, superintendent of the Millcreek Township School District, said on Wednesday. “We’re not just going to go hide.”



The 18-inch wood bats are also meant to be “symbolic,” he said, to remind people that the old policy of simply turning off the lights, shutting the door and hiding, is not enough. Now, he says, one option is fighting back.

“Part of that response is to assess your environment for anything that could be used as a potential weapon or to defend yourself,” he added.

The 600 bats each cost \$3, Mr. Hall said, and are akin to a ballpark souvenir. They are no match, of course, for a gunman toting a semiautomatic weapon. Even so, Mr. Hall said, “I think a bat could disarm a pistol with a nice swing.”

Jon Cacchione, the president of the Millcreek teachers’ union, says it’s better than doing nothing. “Is this going to make the difference if we have an active shooter? I don’t know,” he said, but the bats, along with the other changes the district is employing, are “an improvement of what we had before.”

The bats are meant to be used only during a “hard lockdown situation,” Mr. Hall said, and are locked up in the district’s buildings and classrooms so they don’t fall into the wrong hands.

It’s part of a larger effort to improve school safety, Mr. Hill said, that includes installing a concrete barrier between a parking lot and a walkway, instituting regular police patrols at each of the district’s 10 schools and securing building entrances.

Around the country others are also working to make schools safer. Last month, the superintendent of the Blue Mountain School District in Schuylkill County, Pa., announced that every classroom had been equipped with a five-gallon bucket of stones. “If an armed intruder attempts to gain entrance to any of our classrooms, they will face a classroom full students armed with rocks and they will be stoned,” the superintendent, David Helsel, said at the time.

And last month Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, where the mass shooting took place in February, announced that it would require students to wear clear backpacks. And the Florida Legislature passed a gun control bill on March 7 that would allow superintendents and sheriffs to arm school personnel. But that move was rejected on Tuesday by the school board in Broward County, Fla.

And while Mr. Cacchione said that bats aren’t going to stop an active shooter, “we’re going to keep working at this until we get what’s best.”