



# GRAND CANYON INSTITUTE

## REIMAGINING SCHOOL SAFETY

Submitted to Phoenix Union High School District

Authored by

Laura Rethmann, Research Associate, Grand Canyon Institute

Luis Fernandez, Ph.D., Chair, Criminology and Criminal Justice Department, Northern  
Arizona University

Amy Pedotto, Research Project Manager, Grand Canyon Institute

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report provides information about school districts that are maintaining physical, psychological, and social safety of their students, faculty, and staff, with minimal reliance on law enforcement. We examined the available research on School Resource Officers (SROs) and documented efforts in six districts across the country engaged in such efforts. A brief description of districts, our interview protocol, and additional information can be found in the appendices. This report also identifies strategies for reimagining school safety, highlighting the salient issues that school districts faced in the implementation cycle. Below is a short overview of the literature on SROs, a summary of key findings, and recommendations based on the information collected. The second to last section of the document contains a more detailed discussion of each of the points below.

### **School Resource Officer Overview**

The last 3 decades have seen a significant increase in law enforcement in schools, especially with the use of SROs. Scholars traced the expansion of SRO programs to concerns around juvenile crime, fears of school shootings, and government funding programs. However, evidence suggests that SROs can negatively impact school culture and climate and have little to no impact on crime prevention or deterrence. Alternatively, research largely supports that the presence of SROs in schools increases rates of exclusionary practices, citations, and arrests of students, and decreases educational opportunities, especially for marginalized students.

Nationwide discussions on police brutality and racial injustice combined with schools using remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic have led many school districts to take the first steps to end contracts with SROs. In July 2020, the Phoenix Union High School District decided not to renew its inter-governmental agreement with the City of Phoenix Police Department to engage SROs at its high schools. Instead, the district reallocated safety funds to a \$1.2 million participatory budgeting initiative to reimagine school safety. While school safety is a multidimensional concept, this project continues to gather information to inform strategies to provide for the physical, psychological, and social safety of students, faculty, and staff without relying on law enforcement. Below, we discuss our key findings and recommendations.

### **Key Findings**

Below are some of the salient points that arose during document review and interviews with school officials. Each of these were brought forth by several districts as worth noting.

***Process is important: Reimagining school safety is unfolding and requires time***

- Reimagining school safety is a long-term effort that requires a deliberate and methodical process.

***Building a good student culture is key, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic***

- Students returned to school with increased mental health issues and feelings of isolation, as well as alienation. This made implementation of a new safety model more difficult.
- As such, the safety models reviewed in this research paper required building a positive student culture during difficult times. Thus, school districts need to invest time and resources to rebuild student connections and relationships.

***Build internal capacity in schools: A successful safety model requires more than a centralized team and change of personnel***

- While central office safety response teams are useful and continue to be in place, it is key to also maintain school-based safety personnel to help build relationships and use de-escalation techniques that prevent the need for law enforcement. School-based safety personnel can have varying job descriptions however, these staff are explicitly designated to respond to internal safety-related matters and exterior threats.
- Efforts to build multidisciplinary support networks that extend beyond safety staff alone were identified as an important component of school safety.
- It is important to build school administrator and staff buy-in of new safety requirements, approaches, and protocols.

***Mentors over muscle: Issues with armed personnel***

- All districts developed a safety model that moved from a punitive to a relational approach.
- Emphasis on de-escalation techniques, trauma-informed practices, and nonviolent crisis intervention were suggested.
- Employing armed personnel increases liability insurance and was largely unwanted by students and local communities.
- Districts do not want safety personnel to be perceived as law enforcement.

***Least amount of contact with law enforcement, but not none***

- All districts have mandatory reporting to law enforcement, and thus had to build protocols.
- Districts reported that a switch from a law enforcement to a prevention model often resulted in a strained relationship and loss of communication with the local police department, and that communication gap resulted in numerous challenges that required attention.
- Districts found it useful to outline the responsibilities of schools and police, building police accountability frameworks. This was done either with a new Memorandum of Understanding or clear and specific protocols.

***Safety teams function as mediators between students and law enforcement***

- Districts developed strategies to reduce harmful legal situations for students, mainly through a decrease in police contact.
- Many districts rely heavily on their legal department and Title IX office to navigate issues.
- Some districts' centralized safety personnel are deployed to school sites when there is an incident that requires law enforcement notification.

**Recommendations**

Each district also provided suggestions and recommendations for others undergoing a similar process. Below, we identify useful points encountered during interviews.

***Phased implementation approaches are recommended***

- When adopting a new safety model, it is important to take time to develop a multi-year, phased-in implementation plan that includes identifying, assigning, and implementing safety protocols.
- Assembling a team of individuals who can carefully develop a safety model, with phased-in implementation timelines, was recommended as useful. Team members can include individuals involved in district safety, behavioral support, administrators, teachers, students, families, and community groups.
- The first phase of a new safety model should include identifying all potential school incidents (including threats of and actual violence), how they should be handled, and who is responsible. District and site-based planning should specifically account for how staff will respond in all instances when an SRO would previously be asked to respond to an issue. This information should inform subsequent phases of the planning process.
- Districts should look for these kinds of potential issues:

- Too many people are responsible for a safety component.
- One or two individuals are responsible for too many components.
- No one is responsible for specific safety components.

***If possible, hire, train, and build safety teams after building a thorough safety plan***

- Once school safety plans are developed, districts should then outline the safety personnel needed to fill the gaps.
  - This could be a second phase of implementation.
- If districts choose to use safety personnel, it is recommended that they are hired and trained in de-escalation; trauma-informed, restorative practices; and nonviolent crisis intervention techniques before being placed in schools.

***Build the capacity of schools to handle conflict mediation and crisis intervention***

- Districts should use a community-relational model of crisis response.
- All staff should be consulted, informed, and involved in the process of developing the new safety model to help build both capacity and cooperation.
- It was recommended that districts use multidisciplinary wraparound teams.
  - For example, site-based, coordination service teams or post-crisis response teams that connect students to available resources after behavioral events. Teams can include staff capable of providing mental health services, crisis team members, and communications coordinators.
- Districts should continue to expand and develop programs focused on social and emotional skills, restorative justice, and conflict mediation. (See Appendix B for details.)
- These programs are successful when districts dedicate time and resources for their implementation.

***Districts should clearly outline procedures in instances where law enforcement notification is mandatory. Further, using trained staff as a mediator between students and law enforcement is useful.***

- Districts should consult with their legal advisors and create plans for how law enforcement is notified.
- *If possible and law enforcement is cooperative, draft a memorandum of understanding (MOU) that outlines the procedures and responsibilities of each institution to maintain safety in schools.*

- Train staff to facilitate contact between law enforcement and students to prevent entry into the criminal justice system if at all possible.
- If no formal agreement with local law enforcement is possible, then districts can implement clear policies and procedures across schools to ensure consistency across the district and to guide administrators and staff on how to respond to specific issues.

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## **GLOSSARY**

BOP	Black Organizing Project
CCS	Charlottesville City Schools
COPS	Community Oriented Police Services
COS	Campus Safety Officers
CPD	Charlottesville Police Department
CPI	Crisis Prevention Intervention
CSA	Care and Safety Assistant
CSO	Campus Safety Officer
DCRT	District Critical Response Team
DOJ	US Department of Justice
MBRT	Mobile Behavior Response Team
MMSD	Madison Metropolitan School District
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPS	Minneapolis Public Schools
OAASA	Office of African American Student Achievement
OUSD	Oakland Unified School District
OSPD	Oakland Schools Police Department
PBIS	Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports
RACI	Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, and Informed
RCR	Restorative Critical Response
SEO	School Emphasis Officer
SPS	Seattle Public Schools
SRO	School Resource Officer
SSA	School Security Assistant
SSO	School Security Officer
WCCUSD	West Contra Costa Unified School District

## **INTRODUCTION**

In the past 2 years, over 46 school districts across the United States reconsidered their formal relationship with law enforcement agencies. Large and small cities, such as Minneapolis, Portland, Denver, and Madison, voted to terminate their association with police departments and instead adopted holistic approaches to safety aimed at reducing physical, psychological, and social harm on vulnerable populations, while helping build healthy communities through programs that improve student outcomes.

This research paper provides information on efforts to reimagine school safety in six school districts from across the nation that are similar to Phoenix Union High School District. It presents a brief historical background of the use of School Resource Officers (SROs), their functions, and some of the latest evidence regarding their effectiveness. The document outlines practices from school districts undergoing the reimagining process, highlighting some of the issues that each district faced in their implementation cycle. We conclude with recommendations, including pointing to important issues that school districts confronted.

## **PURPOSE OF RESEARCH PROJECT**

The purpose of this research project was to examine the efforts by school districts around the United States to reimagine school safety utilizing alternatives to SROs. The intent was to outline practices and lessons learned from school districts undergoing the reimagining process so that Phoenix Union has the opportunity to learn from their experiences as it develops a new safety model. To that end, we identify strategies and available information regarding outcomes and effectiveness of such efforts.

## **HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS**

Police were used in schools in Flint, Michigan, as early as the 1950s,<sup>1</sup> while the term “school resource officer” was coined in the 1960s to refer to the sworn police officers assigned to patrol schools. SROs originated with the belief that police in schools would help with crime deterrence.<sup>2</sup> Today, SROs typically perform traditional law enforcement duties, such as patrolling the grounds and investigating legal violations. However, their responsibilities can extend to enacting school discipline, teaching law-related topics,

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<sup>1</sup> Weiler, & Cray, M. (2011). Police at School: A Brief History and Current Status of School Resource Officers. *The Clearing House*, 84(4), 160–163. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00098655.2011.564986>

<sup>2</sup> Coon, & Travis, L. F. (2012). The role of police in public schools: a comparison of principal and police reports of activities in schools. *Police Practice & Research*, 13(1), 15–30. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15614263.2011.589570>

and offering informal advice to students.<sup>3</sup> SROs are typically employed by local police departments and reassigned to specific schools via labor contracts.

Scholars have traced the rise of school policing to the first half of the 20th century.<sup>4</sup> As tactics such as zoning regulations, racial covenants, and tax codes enforced segregated neighborhoods and schools, there was a rising belief among politicians and academics that socioeconomic inequality and increasing poverty rates were the result of a lack of “law and order”<sup>5</sup> among Black and Latino residents. Similar concerns grew in regard to school desegregation. Many White communities argued that Black children lacked discipline and believed this would result in disorder in White schools.<sup>6</sup> Using these fears, public officials emphasized social and economic control, with policing Black and Latino neighborhoods and youth as a central strategy. Racially-founded concerns created the circumstances for policing in schools, particularly SROs, to take hold across the United States.

In the early 1990s, SROs grew as the popular response to youth violence.<sup>7</sup> After the Columbine High School mass shooting in 1999, the federal government pushed for more security and policing, especially in schools. As a result, the implementation of SRO programs grew throughout the 1990s, and by the 2000s, SROs were familiar positions in schools across the country. Between 2005 and 2015 alone, the number of law enforcement officers in schools increased from 36% to 48%,<sup>8</sup> and by 2018, at least one officer was present in approximately 58% of schools across the United States during the school week.<sup>9</sup>

As the use of SROs has increased during the last 3 decades, so have racial disparities in school security. The Office of Civil Rights data showed that in 2013, 51% of high

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<sup>3</sup> National Association of School Resource Officers. (2022). About NASRO. Retrieved February 28, 2022, from <https://www.nasro.org/>

<sup>4</sup> American Civil Liberties Union. (2017, April). *Bullies in Blue: The Origins and Consequences of School Policing*. Retrieved June 23, 2022, from [https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/field\\_document/aclu\\_bullies\\_in\\_blue\\_4\\_11\\_17\\_final.pdf](https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/field_document/aclu_bullies_in_blue_4_11_17_final.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Hinton, E. K. (2017). *From the War on Poverty to the war on crime: The making of mass incarceration in America*. Harvard University Press.

<sup>6</sup> Black, D. (2018). *Ending Zero Tolerance: The Crisis of Absolute School Discipline*. New York University Press. <https://doi.org/10.18574/9781479873128>

<sup>7</sup> Skiba. (2000). *Zero Tolerance, Zero Evidence: An Analysis of School Disciplinary Practice. Policy Research Report*. Indiana Education Policy Center.

<sup>8</sup> Warnick, B. R., & Kapa, R. (2019). Protecting students from gun violence. *Education Next*, 19(2). <https://www.educationnext.org/protecting-students-from-gun-violence-doestarget-hardening-do-more-harm-than-good/>

<sup>9</sup> Diliberti, M., Jackson, M., Correa, S., & Padgett, Z. (2019). Crime, violence, discipline, and safety in U.S. public school: Findings from the school survey on crime and safety: 2017-2018 (NCES 2019-061). Washington DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Note, because SROs are not required to register with a national database nor are police departments or school systems required to report how many SROs they use, all data presented here are estimates based on schools' self-reports.

schools with majority Black and Latino enrollment had sworn law enforcement officers on campus.<sup>10</sup> For the 2019-20 school year, 67.6% of schools with over 71% non-White enrollment were found to have school security staff compared to the national average of 65 percent. For the same year, 95.9% of public schools with 1,000 or more students were found to have school security present at least once a week.<sup>11</sup>

Scholars have traced the expansion of SROs to concerns over juvenile crime, high-profile events such as the 1999 Columbine High School, and increased government funding programs.<sup>12</sup> Increased government funding that provided grants to local jurisdictions between 1994 and 2009 has contributed to the significant growth of SRO programs.<sup>13</sup> The Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 created the Community Oriented Police Services (COPS) Office, based in the US Department of Justice (DOJ), which provided federal funding for community policing services.<sup>14</sup> The COPS Office initiated funding for SROs through the Cops in Schools (CIS) program. The CIS program awarded approximately \$823 million in grants for districts to hire SROs between 1999 and 2005 alone.<sup>15</sup> The program ended in 2005, however, other COPS Office grant programs still offer funds for law enforcement agencies to hire SROs.<sup>16</sup> It is estimated that the federal government has spent over \$1 billion to increase police presence in schools, and more than \$14 billion in efforts to increase community policing, which includes SRO programs, since 1998.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights. (2016, October 28). *2013-14 Civil Rights Data Collection: A first look*. Retrieved June 23, 2022, from <https://ocrdata.ed.gov/assets/downloads/2013-14-first-look.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> National Center for Education Statistics. (2022). *Safety and Security Practices at Public Schools. Condition of Education*. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. Retrieved June 23, 2022, from <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/a19>.

<sup>12</sup> Skiba. (2000). *Zero Tolerance, Zero Evidence: An Analysis of School Disciplinary Practice*. Policy Research Report. Indiana Education Policy Center; Theriot, & Cuellar, M. J. (2016). School resource officers and students' rights. *Contemporary Justice Review* : CJR, 19(3), 363–379. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10282580.2016.1181978>

<sup>13</sup> Theriot, & Cuellar, M. J. (2016). School resource officers and students' rights. *Contemporary Justice Review* : CJR, 19(3), 363–379. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10282580.2016.1181978>

<sup>14</sup> May, Hart, T. A., & Ruddell, R. (2011). School Resource Officers in Financial Crisis: Which Programs Get Cut and Why. *Journal of Police Crisis Negotiations*, 11(2), 125–140. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15332586.2011.581517>

<sup>15</sup> Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. (Aug. 2017). *School Safety Policies and Programs Administered by the U.S. Federal Government: 1990–2016*. Retrieved from <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/251517.pdf>.

<sup>16</sup> Office of Community Oriented Policing Services. (2017). *Program documents: COPS hiring program (CHP): Methodology*. U.S. Department of Justice. <https://cops.usdoj.gov/programdocuments>

<sup>17</sup> Office of Community Oriented Policing Services. (n.d.). About the COPS Office. U.S. Department of Justice <https://cops.usdoj.gov/aboutcops>.; Strategies for Youth. (2019). Two billion dollars later states begin to regulate school resource officers in the nation's schools: A survey of state laws. <https://strategiesforyouth.org/our-publications/>

In the aftermath of the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting, President Obama's Safety Plan provided incentives for increasing SROs in schools, adding over a thousand SROs and counselors across the nation.<sup>18</sup> Despite White males between the ages of 13 and 18 being the most likely to perpetrate school-based shootings, “schools in which the student population is largely composed of youth of color have the highest degree of implementing metal detectors, security officers, SROs, and other police forces.”<sup>19</sup> Specifically, public schools in urban and low-income neighborhoods have experienced the brunt of the nexus of child education and law enforcement punitive disciplinary practices over the last 3 decades.<sup>20</sup> Many scholars have traced the impact of this nexus, specifically identifying the impact law enforcement has on school and student safety. Below, we review the scholarly literature on the effectiveness of SROs.

## **LITERATURE ON SRO PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS**

Assessing the effectiveness of SROs in a systematic way has proved a challenge for scholars. One reason is that the function of SROs varies across districts, and between states. Further, SROs are often employees of local law enforcement agencies, making it difficult to collect the necessary information for assessment because the data is not collected consistently across agencies. This poses a problem when comparing across different school districts. However, there is a growing, but limited, body of scholarly work attempting to assess the usefulness of SROs in schools. Generally speaking, there is not an abundance of evidence supporting the effectiveness of SRO programs. Below is a brief discussion of the existing literature.

### **Strong Law Enforcement Involvement in Schools**

The literature suggests that schools with SRO programs have stronger relationships with local law enforcement agencies, leading to mutual agreement on how to respond to school incidents, enhancing collaboration when necessary. That is, the presence of SROs can serve as a bridge with local law enforcement. Further, the evidence suggests that SRO programs can lead to an increase in police participation in schools. For instance, the Department of Justice (DOJ) funded a study to document the role of police in schools. They surveyed school districts across the United States and found that levels of law enforcement involvement were greater in schools with SRO programs. These schools had higher levels of police conducting:

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<sup>18</sup> White House. (2013). Now is the time: The President's plan to protect our children and our communities by reducing gun violence. Retrieved from [http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/wh\\_now\\_is\\_the\\_time\\_full.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/wh_now_is_the_time_full.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> Morris, M. W. (2018). *Pushout: The criminalization of Black girls in schools*. New Press. p.75

<sup>20</sup> Hinton, E. (2016). From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime: The Making of Mass Incarceration in America. In *Racism in America* (pp. 98-106). Harvard University Press

- patrols of facilities and grounds
- safety and security inspections
- investigations of student-reported criminal activity
- arrests<sup>21</sup>

Further, schools with SRO programs were more likely to have a memorandum of understanding between the district and local law enforcement agency outlining law enforcement response to large scale fights, hostages, and shootings. Finally, while the survey showed more law enforcement engagement, it did not indicate if these activities led to a reduction of school violence or harm.

### **Law Enforcement Officers as Educators and Informal Counselors**

One of the primary intentions of SRO programs is to connect law enforcement with students and staff. To that end, ideal SRO programs do the following:

- *Educate students:* SROs can serve as guest lecturers in the classroom, while implementing evidence-based curricula aimed at reducing conflict and substance abuse, and teaching restorative justice.
- *Teach school staff:* SROs can lead in-service trainings for school personnel, educate staff about justice issues, and provide training on harm prevention.
- *Advise on emergency preparedness:* SROs can help prepare schools to handle crises by informing crisis planning and management systems, and helping the school develop and implement safety procedures.
- *Teach parents and the community:* SROs can provide training to parents and community regarding legal issues, substance abuse, conflict reduction, and involvement in schools.
- *Serve as informal mentors:* SRO programs often connect participating officers with students to improve relations. This can be done through mentor programs.<sup>22</sup>

While the roles outlined above present an ideal type of SRO program, scholarly literature that demonstrates the effectiveness of these SRO functions is scarce. Thus, it is not conclusive that SRO programs across the board produce the effects as intended.

### **Effect of SROs on Views of Police and Policing**

The scholarship is mixed regarding the impact SROs have on students' views of police and policing. Some research suggests that students support the presence of police in schools, with one study suggesting that students tend to see police in schools as a

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<sup>21</sup> Travis, L. F., & Coon, J. K. (2005). *The role of law enforcement in public school safety: A national survey* (pp. 19-20). Cincinnati, OH: University of Cincinnati, Center for Criminal Justice Research.

<sup>22</sup> Rosiak, J. (2014, March). School resource officers: benefits and challenges. In *Forum on Public Policy: A Journal of the Oxford Round Table*. Forum on Public Policy.

normal practice.<sup>23</sup> Further, Theriot shows that increased contact with SROs can have a positive effect on views on policing, but it also decreases feelings of school connectedness. This means that while SRO programs can improve attitudes toward police for some students, students with improved feelings also feel less connected to the school.<sup>24</sup> This type of contradiction in the research is common, with scholars asking for further work to clarify the findings. In sum, it is not yet entirely clear if SRO programs produce the intended outcome of improving students' long-lasting attitudes toward law enforcement.

### **Perception of Safety**

One of the principle aims of SRO programs is to increase feelings of safety in schools. However, the relationship between perceptions of safety and actual victimization is complicated. That is, criminologists have known for decades that fear of crime and being the victim of crime are not necessarily correlated. A given population can have very low probabilities of victimization, but still report high level of fear, while other populations can live in areas with high levels of victimization yet report lower levels of fear. Thus, we must be thoughtful not to conflate perceptions of safety with actual probabilities of harm, while at the same time keep in mind that perceptions matter.

As expected, the literature on feelings of safety and their link to SROs is complicated, suggesting that feelings of safety can vary across different categories of students within the same school. While there is general belief that SROs make students and staff feel safer, the evidence via scholarly research is not conclusive. For example, two of the leading scholars in this area, Theriot and Arme, found that students who interact with SROs can have more positive feelings regarding campus safety. However, they also found a strong relationship between direct experience with violence and feelings of safety. That is, students who have witnessed or been the victim of violence on campus were less likely to feel safe, regardless of their level of interaction with SROs. On the one hand, they found that Black and female students, and students who experienced victimization, or those who attend schools with higher levels of disorder, reported feeling less safe overall, regardless of the level of SRO connectivity.<sup>25</sup> On the other hand,

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<sup>23</sup> Bracy, N. L. (2011). Student perceptions of high-security school environments. *Youth & Society*, 43(1), 365-395; Brown, B. (2005). Controlling crime and delinquency in the schools: An exploratory study of student perceptions of school security measures. *Journal of School Violence*, 4(4), 105-125; Schuiteman, J. G. (2001). *Second annual evaluation of DCJS funded school resource officer programs. Report of the Department of Criminal Justice Services, Fiscal Year 1999-2000*. Richmond, VA: Virginia Dept. of Criminal Justice Services.

<sup>24</sup> Theriot, M. T. (2016). The impact of school resource officer interaction on students' feelings about school and school police. *Crime & Delinquency*, 62(4), 446-469.

<sup>25</sup> Theriot, M. T., & Orme, J. G. (2016). School resource officers and students' feelings of safety at school. *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice*, 14(2), 130-146.



males, older students, students with higher grade point averages, and White students are more likely to report feeling safe.<sup>26</sup>

Regardless, a continued focus on feelings of safety is warranted, since safer feelings have been linked to several positive outcomes, better academic performance, and a more respectful relationship between school staff and students.<sup>27</sup>

## **CONCERNS REGARDING SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS**

This section outlines key concerns found in the current scholarly literature on the use of SROs.

### **School-to-Prison Pipeline**

Scholars use the “school-to-prison pipeline” metaphor to describe the increasing flow of students from underserved populations into correctional institutions. This occurs through a widespread process of punitive zero-tolerance policies. Zero-tolerance policies respond to numerous student behaviors with strict suspension and expulsion.<sup>28</sup> In many ways, the expansion of these policies is primarily responsible for a school-based reliance on law enforcement and school security guards.<sup>29</sup> Once zero-tolerance policies were embedded in schools, policing became one of the most prominent strategies for reducing violence in schools, often taking the form of SROs.<sup>30</sup>

Scholars suggest that SRO employment in schools can lead to security strategies that connect students to the criminal justice system. The use and role of SROs varies across the country, making it difficult to generalize their direct impact on student safety and well-being. However, most empirical research finds that schools with SROs are more likely to have higher levels of student suspensions, expulsions, citations, and arrests.<sup>31</sup> Evidence suggests that when disciplinary matters become criminal, educational

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<sup>26</sup> Lacoë, J. (2015). Unequally safe: The race gap in school safety. *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice*, 13, 143–168; Varjas, K., Henrich, C. C., & Meyers, J. (2009). Urban middle school students’ perceptions of bullying, cyberbullying, and school safety. *Journal of School Violence*, 8, 159–176; Eisenbraun, K. D. (2007). Violence in schools: Prevalence, prediction, and prevention. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 12, 459–469.

<sup>27</sup> Bachman, R., Randolph, A., & Brown, B. L. (2011). Predicting perceptions of fear at school and going to and from school for African American and White students: The effects of school security measures. *Youth & Society*, 43, 705–726.

<sup>28</sup> Evans, K., & Vaandering, D. (2016). *The little book of restorative justice in education: Fostering responsibility, healing, and Hope in schools*. Good Books.

<sup>29</sup> Morris, M. W. (2018). *Pushout: The criminalization of Black girls in schools*. New Press. p.4

<sup>30</sup> Brown. (2006). Understanding and assessing school police officers: A conceptual and methodological comment. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 34(6), 591–604. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2006.09.013>

<sup>31</sup> Theriot, & Cuellar, M. J. (2016). School resource officers and students’ rights. *Contemporary Justice Review : CJR*, 19(3), 363–379. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10282580.2016.1181978>

opportunities decrease, graduation rates drop, and contact with the criminal justice system increases, contributing to the “school-to-prison” pipeline.<sup>32</sup>

Criminologists Chongmin Na and Denise Gottfredson (2011) argue that schools that employed SROs report more minor offenses, ultimately expanding the reach of the criminal justice system.<sup>33</sup> Most school-based arrests are for non-violent incidents, such as disruptive behavior.<sup>34</sup> SROs can escalate student situations from non-criminal acts to behaviors classified as “disorderly conduct,” which can lead to criminal charges.<sup>35</sup> Research has found schools with SRO programs have higher arrest rates for minor offenses, such as simple assault.<sup>36</sup>

Police presence on school campuses has directly contributed to the school-to-prison pipeline which exacerbates inequalities among students of color, those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, students with disabilities, and LGBTQ+ students.<sup>37</sup> Importantly, harsh disciplinary actions and security strategies tend to be concentrated in schools with greater levels of racial and ethnic minorities, especially those located in urban areas.<sup>38</sup> Research has found that the proportion of minority students, low-income students, and district enrollment size have a direct relationship to the amount districts spend on security efforts.<sup>39</sup> For example, one study found that “having a high proportion

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<sup>32</sup> Kim, Hewitt, D. T., & Losen, D. J. (2010). *The School-to-Prison Pipeline : Structuring Legal Reform* . New York University Press. <https://doi.org/10.18574/9780814749197>; Marchbanks, T. M., Peguero, A. A., Varela, K. S., Blake, J. J., & Eason, J. M. (2018). School Strictness and Disproportionate Minority Contact: Investigating Racial and Ethnic Disparities With the “School-to-Prison Pipeline.” *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice*, 16(2), 241–259. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1541204016680403>

<sup>33</sup> Na, Chongmin & Gottfredson, C. Denise (2011): Police Officers in Schools: Effects on School Crime and the Processing of Offending Behaviors, *Justice Quarterly*, DOI:10.1080/07418825.2011.615754

<sup>34</sup> ACLU, n.d. *School-to-prison pipeline*. <https://www.aclu.org/issues/juvenile-justice/school-prison-pipeline>

<sup>35</sup> Anderson, K. A. (2018). Policing and middle school: An evaluation of a statewide school resource officer policy. *Middle Grades Review*, 4(2). <https://scholarworks.uvm.edu/mgreview/vol4/iss2/7>  
Javdani, S. (2019). Policing education: An empirical review of the challenges and impact of the work of school police officers. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 63(3-4), 253-269. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ajcp.12306>

<sup>36</sup> Teske, S. C., & Huff, B. J. (2011). When did making adults mad become a crime? The court's role in dismantling the school-to-prison pipeline. *Juvenile and Family Justice Today*, 14-17. <https://www.reclaimingfutures.org/sites/default/files/documents/TodayWinter2011feature.pdf>

<sup>37</sup> Evans, K., & Vaandering, D. (2016). *The little book of restorative justice in education: Fostering responsibility, healing, and Hope in schools*. Good Books.

<sup>38</sup> Welch, & Payne, A. A. (2012). Exclusionary School Punishment: The Effect of Racial Threat on Expulsion and Suspension. *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice*, 10(2), 155–171. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1541204011423766>

<sup>39</sup> DeAngelis, Brent, B. O., & Ianni, D. (2011). The Hidden Cost of School Security. *Journal of Education Finance*, 36(3), 312–337. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jef.2011.0004>;

Timothy J. Servoss & Jeremy D. Finn (2014) School Security: For Whom and With What Results?, *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 13:1, 61-92, DOI: [10.1080/15700763.2014.890734](https://doi.org/10.1080/15700763.2014.890734)

of African-American students was the strongest predictor of school security level, even when controlling for region, urbanicity, enrollment, neighborhood crime, student misbehavior, and school SES [socioeconomic status].<sup>40</sup>

Furthermore, Black and Latino populations represent 70% of all school-based arrests and referrals to the justice system,<sup>41</sup> and students of color are six times more likely than White students to be suspended for disruptive behavior.<sup>42</sup> The presence of SROs in schools can also have real, or perceived, risks for undocumented students.<sup>43</sup>

Undocumented students, especially those attending school in areas where local law enforcement has a contract with Immigration and Customs Enforcement under 287(g) agreements to enforce federal immigration law, are put at risk for deportation when in contact with SROs.<sup>44</sup> Notably, since 2013, recipients of COPS Grants have been required to have 287(g) agreements.<sup>45</sup>

SROs expand the surveillance of students and report more offenses than would otherwise be reported, resulting in numerous consequences for youth. When disciplinary matters become criminal, students experience lower rates of graduation, fewer educational opportunities, and increased contact with the criminal justice system, thus contributing to the school-to-prison pipeline. Furthermore, SRO programs have been linked to negative impacts on school climate.

### **School Climate**

Employing SROs in schools can create a culture of fear and control at the expense of a safe and nurturing learning environment. SROs contribute to more citations and arrests of children, while also posing a physical threat to students. Despite the lack of national data, local studies have shown that schools with SROs have prevalent levels of use of force and instances of abusive levels of force against students have been increasingly

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<sup>40</sup> Timothy J. Servoss & Jeremy D. Finn (2014) School Security: For Whom and With What Results?, *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 13:1, 61-92, DOI: [10.1080/15700763.2014.890734](https://doi.org/10.1080/15700763.2014.890734)

<sup>41</sup> Heitzeg, N. (2014). Criminalizing education: Zero tolerance policies, police in the hallways, and the school to prison pipeline. *Counterpoints*, 453, 11-36. [https://www.hamline.edu/uploadedFiles/Hamline\\_WWW/HSE/Documents/criminalizingeducation-zero-tolerance-police.pdf](https://www.hamline.edu/uploadedFiles/Hamline_WWW/HSE/Documents/criminalizingeducation-zero-tolerance-police.pdf)

<sup>42</sup> Blad, E., & Harwin, A. (2017). Black students more likely to be arrested at school. *Education Weekly*, 36(19), 10-12. <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/black-students-more-likely-to-be-arrested-at-school/2017/01>

<sup>43</sup> Marquez, N., & Prandini, R. (2018, February). *School to prison to deportation pipeline*. Retrieved April 28, 2022, from [https://www.ilrc.org/sites/default/files/resources/school\\_delinq\\_faq\\_nat-rp-20180212.pdf](https://www.ilrc.org/sites/default/files/resources/school_delinq_faq_nat-rp-20180212.pdf)

<sup>44</sup> 8 U.S.C § 1357 (g).

<sup>45</sup> U.S. Department of Justice. (2017). COPS office grant application: *City of Bridgeport* (CT046ZZ). <https://cops.usdoj.gov/AwardAnnouncementMap>

identified.<sup>46</sup> One report published by *Mother Jones Magazine* found that between 2010 and 2015, SROs severely injured twenty-eight students and even caused the death of another.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, in Birmingham, Alabama, schools were sued in a class-action lawsuit because 199 students had been sprayed “with a combination of pepper spray and tear gas agent called Freeze + P, which causes extreme pain and skin irritation and can impede breathing and vision,” between 2006 and 2014. Notably, all of these students were Black.<sup>48</sup> According to the Advancement Project, in the last 10 years, there have been 61 incidents of police brutality in schools.<sup>49</sup> Students across the country have been pepper-sprayed, tasered, body-slammed, and choked by SROs.<sup>50</sup>

Concentrated surveillance and security measures are found to negatively affect school climate and culture. High-poverty urban schools are more likely to heavily monitor students and use invasive police searches than suburban districts,<sup>51</sup> contributing to disparities in students' mental health and well-being. Research indicates that school districts with high levels of surveillance and security measures become an environmental stressor for many students, especially for Black students in urban schools.<sup>52</sup> Hyper-surveillance negatively impacts students' psychological health and has been found to increase rates of stress, depression, anxiety, and PTSD.<sup>53</sup>

Police presence in schools can create a climate of fear and mistrust, and can negatively impact a student's ability to learn.<sup>54</sup> Empirical research shows that students who attend schools with SRO programs are less likely to have strong connections to school,

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<sup>46</sup> Chan, Counts, J., Katsiyannis, A., & Ryan, J. (2019). Litigation and School Resource Officers. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 28(12), 3296–3306. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-019-01504-7>

<sup>47</sup> Lee, J. (2015, July 14). *Chokeholds, brain injuries, beatings: When school cops go bad*. Mother Jones. Retrieved January 4, 2022, from <https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2015/07/police-school-resource-officers-k-12-misconduct-violence>

<sup>48</sup> Vitale, A. S. (2017). *The End of Policing*. Verso. p.65

<sup>49</sup> Advancement Project. (2018). We came here to learn: A call to action for police-free schools. <https://advancementproject.org/wecametolearn/>

<sup>50</sup> Klein, R. (2018, September 8). The other side of school safety: Students are getting tasered and beaten by police. The Huffington Post. [https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/school-safetystudents-policeabuse\\_us\\_5b746a4ce4b0df9b093b8d6a](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/school-safetystudents-policeabuse_us_5b746a4ce4b0df9b093b8d6a)

<sup>51</sup> Monahan, T., & Torres, R. (Eds.). (2009). *Schools Under Surveillance: Cultures of Control in Public Education*. Rutgers University Press. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt5hj93f>

<sup>52</sup> Brondolo, E., Rieppi, R., Kelly, K., & Gerin, W. (2009). Perceived racism and blood pressure: A review of the literature and conceptual and methodological critique. *Annals of Behavioral Medicine*. 25(1), 55–65. [https://doi.org/10.1207/S15324796ABM2501\\_08](https://doi.org/10.1207/S15324796ABM2501_08)

<sup>53</sup> Brondolo, E., Love, E.E., Pencille, M., Schoenthaler, A., & Ogedegbe, G. (2011). Racism and hypertension: A review of the empirical evidence and implications for clinical practice. *American Journal of Hypertension*. 24(5), 518–529. <https://doi.org/10.1038/ajh.2011.9>

<sup>54</sup> Theriot, & Cuellar, M. J. (2016). School resource officers and students' rights. *Contemporary Justice Review: CJR*, 19(3), 363–379. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10282580.2016.1181978>

negatively impacting school climate.<sup>55</sup> Notably, increased police presence can decrease student inclusivity, especially for marginalized students.<sup>56</sup> School climate studies have found that student experiences and perceptions of school climate have significant differences across race and ethnicity. For example, compared to White students, Black students who attend schools with SROs are more likely to report feeling unsafe, detached, and unsupported at school.<sup>57</sup>

SRO presence in schools can pose physical and psychological harms to students and reduce students' feelings of connectedness. Students who feel connected to school are more likely to have higher attendance rates and better academic performance, and are less likely to engage in harmful behaviors.<sup>58</sup> Yet, approximately 10 million students in the United States attend schools with police, but without social workers. Six million students are in schools with police officers, but no psychologist, and approximately 3 million students are in schools that employ police but not nurses.<sup>59</sup> Considering the negative impact SRO programs have on school climate and culture, it is worth considering their effectiveness in providing safety and security to students.

### **School Safety**

Importantly, the presence of SROs in schools has been shown to have little impact on crime prevention or deterrence. While SROs operate differently across the United States, most research suggests that SROs do not reduce violence or theft, but rather the rates of reported crimes increase with the presence of SROs.<sup>60</sup> Similarly, there is little to no evidence that SROs effectively deter or respond to emergency events such as mass shootings.<sup>61</sup>

While SRO programs expanded in the aftermath of mass shootings, it is important to recognize that police presence has not been proven effective in preventing or responding to these events. For instance, there were armed officers at both Columbine and Parkland high schools when mass shootings began. In fact, one study examined

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<sup>55</sup> Kupchik, A. (2020, August). Research on the impact of school policing. ACLU Pennsylvania. <https://fisafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Research-on-School-Policing-byAaron-Kupchik-July-2020.pdf>

<sup>56</sup> Shedd, C. (2016). *Unequal city: Race, schools, and perceptions of injustice*. Russell Sage Foundation.

<sup>57</sup> Theriot, & Cuellar, M. J. (2016). School resource officers and students' rights. *Contemporary Justice Review: CJR*, 19(3), 363–379. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10282580.2016.1181978>

<sup>58</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2018).

<sup>59</sup> Whitaker, A., Torres-Guillen, S., Morton, M., Jordan, H., Coyle, S., Mann, A., & Sun, W. L. (2019). *Cops and no counselors: How the lack of school mental health staff is harming students*. New York, NY: American Civil Liberties Union.

<sup>60</sup> Vitale, A. S. (2017). *The End of Policing*. Verso.

<sup>61</sup> James, N., & McCallion, G. (2013). School resource officers: law enforcement officers in schools. Congressional Research Service. <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/misc/R43126.pdf>

schools that experienced a school shooting between 1999 and 2018 and found that the schools with an SRO had a 2.5 times higher rate of injuries and deaths than schools without an SRO present.<sup>62</sup>

School shootings are devastating, and their harms must be accounted for. While school districts need to be aware and prepared for such an event, armed school police have not proven to be an effective safety strategy. Most school shootings are not committed by intruders or outsiders, but rather by current or former students.<sup>63</sup> Additionally, in almost all mass school shootings, someone in the school community was aware that there was a threat.<sup>64</sup> One study found that in more than three-fourths of school shootings examined, “the attacker had told a friend, schoolmate or sibling about his idea before taking action.”<sup>65</sup> Additionally, the people who knew of the threat, often a peer, failed to report their concern to an adult. A 2008 study by the Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education found that students’ perception of school culture or misjudgment about the level of threat influenced their decision to report information.<sup>66</sup>

Although no single intervention will prevent school violence, developing a positive school culture can allow students to better express their thoughts and concerns and reduce the likelihood of these incidents.<sup>67</sup> By fostering a trusting school climate, students can raise concerns about potential threats to trusting adults, allowing school staff to provide students with support and appropriate interventions. Additionally, strong networks of support, such as partnerships between mental health providers, families,

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<sup>62</sup> Mowen, T. J. (2020, February 5). Sociologist presents research behind headlines about school safety. *BG Independent News*. <https://bgindependentmedia.org/sociologist-presents-research-behind-headlines-about-schoolsafety/>

<sup>63</sup> Center for Homeland Defense and Security . (2020, October 15). *Shooting Incidents at K-12 Schools 1970- Present* . K-12 School Shooting Database. Retrieved June 23, 2022, from <https://www.chds.us/ssdb/charts-graphs/#shootersaffiliation>

<sup>64</sup> Paolini, A. (2015). *School shootings and Student Mental Health: Role of the School Counselor in Mitigating Violence*. Retrieved June 23, 2022, from <https://www.counseling.org/docs/default-source/vistas/school-shootings-and-student-mental-health.p>

<sup>65</sup> Shuster. (2009). Preventing, Preparing for Critical Incidents in Schools. *National Institute of Justice Journal*, p.43.

<sup>66</sup> Pollack, Modzeleski, W., & Rooney, G. (2008). *Prior knowledge of potential school-based violence : information students learn may prevent a targeted attack*. United States Secret Service. Retrieved June 23, 2022, from [https://arizona-nau.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01NAU\\_INST/1tbnpba/alma991009276107603842](https://arizona-nau.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01NAU_INST/1tbnpba/alma991009276107603842)

<sup>67</sup> Paolini, A. (2015). *School shootings and Student Mental Health: Role of the School Counselor in Mitigating Violence*. Retrieved June 23, 2022, from <https://www.counseling.org/docs/default-source/vistas/school-shootings-and-student-mental-health.p>

and community organizations can reduce the likelihood of school violence by identifying students at risk early.<sup>68</sup>

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Overview**

As stated previously, this report documents strategies for maintaining school safety with reduced law enforcement. To that end, a qualitative, multiple-case study research design was used focusing on school districts implementing alternative forms of school safety. After reviewing 46 potential school districts from across the United States, the team selected the following six locations for our case studies:

1. Seattle Public Schools, WA
2. Charlottesville City Schools, VA
3. Minneapolis School District, MN
4. West Contra Costa County Schools, CA
5. Madison Metropolitan School District, WI
6. Oakland Unified School District, CA

Below, we describe the selection process, followed by a brief description of the methods used to collect data.

### **Case Selection**

Our team identified six school districts based on explicit criteria developed in conversations with Phoenix Union staff. Using a basic Internet search and consulting with several experts in the field, we found a list of 46 districts from across the United States that had changed their relationship with school police officers and engaged in new practices for maintaining school safety.

Six school districts were selected based on size, demographics, and similar operational goals to Phoenix Union. Appendix C contains a demographic description for each district in the study. We began by identifying 10 districts closest in demographics and 10 districts closest in size to Phoenix Union. Five districts overlapped between these two categories. From these five, we eliminated any that did not meet our similar goal criteria. We interpreted operationalized goals as those schools who had removed resource officers and were implementing active safety strategies. Once districts that were not found to have similar goals were eliminated, we varied our selection by state to ensure a broader selection.

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<sup>68</sup> Bonanno, & Levenson, R. L. (2014). School Shooters: History, Current Theoretical and Empirical Findings, and Strategies for Prevention. *SAGE Open*, 4(1), 215824401452542–. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244014525425>

## **Data Collection**

After exhausting publicly available information on each location, we interviewed key personnel associated with the programs to better understand implementation and lessons learned. We aimed to interview one individual from the safety department and one administrator from each location. However, given the context of schools completing end-of-year reviews and personnel having limited time, we successfully contacted one staff member from each district.

Participants were asked questions in the following areas:

- Background information to adopting a new safety model
- Program design (personnel, services, plans in place, cost)
- Other changes resulting from separating from law enforcement (legal implications, logistical arrangements)
- Outcomes (available qualitative/quantitative data, pros and cons, challenges faced, and community response)

Appendix A contains the full Interview Protocol used during interviews. The interviewer recorded and took notes during each interview. Then interviews were analyzed looking for themes that crossed districts or that related to the interests of Phoenix Union.

The section below contains a full report of the data for each district.

## **DATA REPORTING**

The cases selected represent a sample of school districts that are similar to Phoenix Union. All six districts voted to discontinue SROs, mainly due to disparities in citations and arrests rates of students of color. Further, districts also stated a desire to disrupt the school-to-prison pipeline, as well as having to respond to community pressure to change their relationship with law enforcement. While all districts broke ties with law enforcement after the George Floyd protests of 2020, and also cited budgetary constraints resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, most (but not all) began their work much earlier. That is, while the Black Lives Matter movement and the pandemic served as catalysts, some districts were already considering different safety models prior to their votes to end their SRO programs. Below is an analysis of each location based on publicly available information and interviews with school officials.



## **Seattle Public Schools, WA**

### **Background Information**

For years, Seattle Public Schools' (SPS) data pointed toward significant racial disparities in police contact. The disparities were highlighted in 2019, when a White teacher at Van Asselt Elementary School called the police on a Black fifth grader after the student allegedly threatened the teacher.<sup>69</sup> The event initiated discussions on police involvement with students, the school-to-prison pipeline, and SPS' race relations. Student activism, parent groups, and the organization WA-Bloc, pushed the school board vote to end SPS' partnership with the Seattle Police in June 2020.<sup>70</sup> This decision terminated the SRO program, as well as prevented Seattle Police from using school district property to stage and prepare for protests.<sup>71</sup>

### **Safety Personnel**

#### *Prior and current staffing*

When SPS employed SROs, the district distinguished their safety staff from other SRO programs in the country by renaming their safety personnel School Emphasis Officers (SEOs).<sup>72</sup> These personnel were employed primarily in five middle schools, and "most were focused on mentoring youth and diversion from gang activity, or associated behaviors like drug dealing and violence," while approximately two SEOs had a clear emphasis on exterior threats.<sup>73</sup> Additionally, SPS had one traditional SRO and used Seattle police officers for security at athletic events before the vote to indefinitely suspend the SRO program.

When SPS employed SEOs/SROs, the district also relied on School Security Specialists in schools. As part of its new safety plan, SPS has expanded and adjusted the use of these specialists.

#### *Roles and responsibilities*

SPS has maintained a Safety and Security Department for many years. This department includes an alarm office that monitors and responds to abnormal activities,

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<sup>69</sup> Bazzaz, D. (2019, August 5). *A White Seattle teacher told police she felt unsafe around a Black fifth-grader who she says threatened her*. Retrieved March 18, 2022, from <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/education/a-white-seattle-teacher-told-police-she-felt-unsafe-around-a-black-fifth-grader-who-she-says-threatened-her/>

<sup>70</sup> Bazzaz, D., & Furfaro, H. (2020, August 12). *Police presence at Seattle Public Schools halted indefinitely*. Retrieved March 18, 2022, from <https://www.seattletimes.com/education-lab/police-presence-at-seattle-public-schools-halted-indefinitely>

<sup>71</sup> SPS Safety and Security Department Official, personal communication, May 2, 2022.

<sup>72</sup> SPS Safety and Security Department Official, personal communication, May 2, 2022.

<sup>73</sup> SPS Safety and Security Department Official, personal communication, May 2, 2022.

assigns School Security Specialists to schools, and includes mobile division lead specialists. The School Security Specialists respond to “critical incidents in schools, de-escalate and intervene in volatile situations, and investigate and file security incident reports.”<sup>74</sup> The district also has Division Lead Specialists that can be dispatched to school requests for support.<sup>75</sup>

Even with the SRO/SEO program, the Safety and Security Department responded to the “vast majority, if not all, fights, drugs, weapons, and so on, without law enforcement involvement,”<sup>76</sup> leaving the SEOs to focus on exterior threats to the school or provide mentoring programs. Only in incidents when the school needed to call 911, such as for a real gun, did the Safety and Security Team find some benefit in involving the SEO due to their ability to respond to students and families in a more productive way than an unfamiliar officer called to the scene.<sup>77</sup>

The district discontinued its SRO program when students were in remote learning during the 2020-2021 school year. SPS placed a hiring freeze on the Safety and Security Department during this time. As a result, about a quarter of the safety and Security Team needed to be hired in the 2021 school year.<sup>78</sup> Notably, SEOs, SROs, and the officers used for events were funded by the Seattle Police Department and not SPS, however, the district paid the Seattle Police Department an estimated \$120,000 to hire officers for specific events during the 2019-2020 school year. Because SPS does not have contracts with the Seattle Police Department outside of providing officers for athletic events, the school board estimated that replacing the officers used in the district schools would result in an estimated cost of \$500,000 per academic year.<sup>79</sup> The Safety and Security Department’s 2019-2020 budget was \$4,802,085 which increased to \$5,203,169 for the 2021-2022 school year.

SPS’ primary student offenses are fights, drugs, and weapons. These offenses, as well as hallway management, preventing outside trespassers, and managing general safety situations such as evacuations and drills, are handled by School Security Specialists. As a minimum requirement, School Security Specialists monitor passing times, review incidents, and build community connections. The SPS standard is to have one specialist

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<sup>74</sup> Seattle Public Schools. (2022, January 31). *Safety and Security*. Retrieved April 1, 2022, from <https://www.seattleschools.org/departments/safety-security/>

<sup>75</sup> Seattle Public Schools. (2022, January 31). *Safety and Security*. Retrieved April 1, 2022, from <https://www.seattleschools.org/departments/safety-security/>

<sup>76</sup> SPS Assistant Manager, Safety and Security, personal communication, May 2, 2022.

<sup>77</sup> SPS Assistant Manager, Safety and Security, personal communication, May 2, 2022.

<sup>78</sup> SPS Safety and Security Department Official, personal communication, May 2, 2022.

<sup>79</sup> Hersey, B., Dewolf, Z., & Hampson, C. (2020, June 24). *School Board Action Report*. Retrieved March 1, 2022, from [https://www.seattleschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/A01\\_20200624\\_Resolution-1920-38-Affirming-SPS-Commitment-to-Black-students\\_Updated20200624.pdf](https://www.seattleschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/A01_20200624_Resolution-1920-38-Affirming-SPS-Commitment-to-Black-students_Updated20200624.pdf)

for each middle school and two for each high school, although they are considering placing three in each high school.

Division Leads operate out of a central office and are encouraged to check on their division as often as possible, mentor new security staff, and respond to calls from schools that need support. The Safety and Security Department also includes after-hours personnel who focus on patrolling school grounds and external threats when school is not in session. In total, the Safety and Security Department has 61 staff: approximately 40 in schools, between five and 10 in the office, and another 10 to 15 that are on the after-hours team.<sup>80</sup>

### *Criteria for hire*

School Security Specialists' required skill sets emphasize mentoring students and helping those in crisis. As one district official stated, "it is easier to teach someone who cares about kids how to keep a building safe than it is to teach someone who knows how to keep the building safe how to care about kids and staff."<sup>81</sup> Qualifications for the specialist role include multiple years working with at-risk youth in addition to having safety work experience. Many specialists are also coaches or are active within the larger community. Division Leads are a promotional spot for School Security Specialists.

In consideration of students' perception of safety personnel, School Security Specialists do not wear uniforms. Instead they wear clothing appropriate to respond to emergent situations. Additionally, they do not carry restraining tools or any type of weapon.<sup>82</sup>

### *Training*

SPS uses a program called CPI (Crisis Prevention Intervention) to train safety personnel in de-escalation and non-violent crisis intervention. Specifically, SPS emphasizes disengagement and de-escalation, with only about a third of training focused on the use of physical restraints in accordance with practices that do not hurt students and cause minimal emotional trauma. Additionally, staff receive an SRO training that is modified to better fit the roles of their team.<sup>83</sup>

### *After-school hours*

Safety and Security Team members that work with students do not work during after-school activities, unless under rare and unique circumstances when a principal or program has elected for overtime. After-school programs can call the after-hours team

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<sup>80</sup> SPS Assistant Manager, Safety and Security, personal communication, May 2, 2022.

<sup>81</sup> SPS Assistant Manager, Safety and Security, personal communication, May 2, 2022.

<sup>82</sup> SPS Safety and Security Department Official, personal communication, May 2, 2022.

<sup>83</sup> SPS Safety and Security Department Official, personal communication, May 2, 2022.

for support if needed. However, due to the size of the SPS district and after-hours staffs' minimal emphasis on student relationships, after-school incidents that are unable to be managed by those supervising after-school activities will likely result in a 911 call, although student behavior incidents at after-school programs are extremely rare for SPS.

For decades police officers have worked SPS sporting events, and because these officers were never a part of the SRO program, the district still can hire them for events. However, as sporting event sizes increase, SPS will likely use a model where the Safety and Security Team gets paid overtime to manage what occurs in the confines of the athletic event and law enforcement will be hired to handle incidents that happen outside of the event.<sup>84</sup>

### **Discipline Procedures/Crisis Response**

#### *Formal agreement with law enforcement*

It is unclear whether SPS had an MOU with law enforcement in effect at the time of their decision to separate from SROs. SPS does not currently have an MOU with law enforcement. However, according to an official in the Safety and Security Department, SPS is working to develop formalized relationships with SPD and hopes to reach an agreement within the next few months. Additionally, it does not appear that SPS has had changes to their liability insurance as a result of the removal of SEOs.<sup>85</sup>

#### *Mandatory reporting*

As for mandatory reporting, 911 is called when there is a real gun, in situations with a minor sexual assault victim, or in similar situations where the emergency is out of the school's scope or capacity to address. Unless there is an imminent threat, the Safety and Security department strongly advises staff to consult with the legal department before calling 911 to create a strategy and prevent placing students in harmful legal situations. The department relies heavily on the legal department and the Title IX office to respond to situations as they arise.<sup>86</sup>

#### *Crisis response*

Since discontinuing the SEO program, SPS has not made changes to its active shooter planning and preparations. As a district official stated, SPS has 105 schools, and employed only five SEOs, "so they were not the active shooter answer anyways."<sup>87</sup> SPS

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<sup>84</sup> SPS Safety and Security Department Official, personal communication, May 2, 2022.

<sup>85</sup> SPS Safety and Security Department Official, personal communication, May 2, 2022.

<sup>86</sup> SPS Safety and Security Department Official, personal communication, May 2, 2022.

<sup>87</sup> SPS Safety and Security Department Official, personal communication, May 2, 2022.

does both lockdown and shelter-in-place drills, but active shooter situations are always a 911 call.

### *Facilities*

Due to a continuous rise of violent crime in the Seattle area, SPS is beginning to make further investments in updating school facilities. For example, many older buildings have open-concepts and are tied into the neighboring park, which has recently resulted in more transients entering school boundaries. In response, there appears to be a community desire to have different designs for construction and more fences. Additionally, SPS believes there is an increased desire for things such as badged entry, AI phone buzz entry, and cameras on school grounds.<sup>88</sup>

### **Staff Support & Wraparound Services**

On June 15, 2021, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction approved the SPS Academic and Student Well-being Recovery Plan. The plan addresses six themes: student well-being, student and family voices, professional learning, recovery and acceleration, diagnostic assessment tools, and community partnerships. As part of this plan, SPS developed a comprehensive plan known as “A Culture of Care,” to address the well-being of all students during the 2021-2022 school year. The Culture of Care plan includes strengthening partnerships with “community-based organizations and culturally relevant agencies with a focus on mental health, counseling, and supports,” and the development of clear contacts and processes for schools without counselors, social workers, or care coordination staff to connect students with support services.<sup>89</sup> Additionally, the plan includes “monthly community circles, restorative practices, social-emotional and trauma-informed lessons and supports incorporated into daily instruction.”<sup>90</sup> Student and family climate surveys will also be used to evaluate student progress and the effectiveness of SPS supports and interventions.

Furthermore, the Office of Public Affairs and the Division of Equity, Partnerships, and Engagement developed a school community and engagement plan. This plan includes ongoing engagement “with over 20 community-based organizations that primarily serve

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<sup>88</sup> SPS Safety and Security Department Official, personal communication, May 2, 2022.

<sup>89</sup> Seattle Public Schools. (2021, December 31). *Academic and student well-being recovery plan*. Seattle Public Schools. Retrieved June 7, 2022, from <https://www.seattleschools.org/news/academic-and-student-well-being-recovery-plan/>

<sup>90</sup> Seattle Public Schools. (2021, December 31). *Academic and student well-being recovery plan*. Seattle Public Schools. Retrieved June 7, 2022, from <https://www.seattleschools.org/news/academic-and-student-well-being-recovery-plan/>

students of color furthest from educational justice and their families,” as well as language-specific strategies and regional and staff meetings.<sup>91</sup>

At this time, it does not appear that SPS has added additional staff in developing their new safety model.

### **School Climate/Culture**

The SPS school board has introduced an anti-racism policy and voted to develop a Black studies curriculum for grades K-5 as well as a required Black studies course for middle and high school students.<sup>92</sup> These provisions are in addition to the district’s 2019 Strategic Plan, known as Seattle Excellence, that created an Office of African American Male Achievement to provide extra support for Black male students<sup>93</sup> and made investments in social-emotional learning programs.<sup>94</sup>

Further, as part of the Academic and Student Well-Being Recovery Plan, SPS has made improvements to their Multi-Tiered System of Supports program, expanded access to core instruction for multilingual students, identified 13 priority schools where more than 50% of the district’s K-3 Black boys are enrolled and provided teachers with additional support, and had a district-wide implementation of Since Time Immemorial, Black Studies, and Ethnic Studies.<sup>95</sup> Since Time Immemorial, a tribally-developed curriculum taught in all schools,<sup>96</sup> and Black Studies, a course that focuses on Black experiences through an intersectional lens,<sup>97</sup> are efforts to provide community-centered,

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<sup>91</sup> Seattle Public Schools. (2021, December 31). *Academic and student well-being recovery plan*. Seattle Public Schools. Retrieved June 7, 2022, from <https://www.seattleschools.org/news/academic-and-student-well-being-recovery-plan/>

<sup>92</sup> Hersey, B., Dewolf, Z., & Hampson, C. (2020, June 24). *School Board Action Report*. Retrieved March 1, 2022, from [https://www.seattleschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/A01\\_20200624\\_Resolution-1920-38-Affirming-SPS-Commitment-to-Black-students\\_Updated20200624.pdf](https://www.seattleschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/A01_20200624_Resolution-1920-38-Affirming-SPS-Commitment-to-Black-students_Updated20200624.pdf)

<sup>93</sup> Seattle Public Schools. (2019, March 27). *2019-24 Seattle Public Schools Strategic Plan*. Retrieved April 2, 2022, from <https://www.seattleschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/2019-24-ApprovedStratPlan.3.27.19.pdf>

<sup>94</sup> Seattle Public Schools. (2021, November 30). *Social Emotional Learning Skills*. Retrieved April 1, 2022, from <https://www.seattleschools.org/departments/social-emotional-learning-skills/>

<sup>95</sup> Seattle Public Schools. (2021, December 31). *Academic and student well-being recovery plan*. Seattle Public Schools. Retrieved June 7, 2022, from <https://www.seattleschools.org/news/academic-and-student-well-being-recovery-plan/>

<sup>96</sup> Seattle Public Schools. (2022, January 3). *2019 since time immemorial: Tribal sovereignty*. Retrieved June 15, 2022, from <https://www.seattleschools.org/academics/alignment-and-adoption/curriculum-adoption/2019-since-time-immemorial-tribal-sovereignty/#:~:text=The%20adoption%20of%20Since%20Time,who%20is%20of%20Washington%20state.>

<sup>97</sup> Seattle Public Schools. (2021, October). *Black Studies*. Retrieved June 15, 2022, from [https://www.seattleschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/black\\_studies23.pdf](https://www.seattleschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/black_studies23.pdf)

responsive education. Ethnic Studies is a curriculum program that focuses on the experiences of people of color across content areas.<sup>98</sup>

### **Challenges/Lessons/Outcomes**

According to the Safety and Security Department, the benefits of SPS' new safety model have outweighed any of the challenges resulting from the separation from law enforcement. Yet, lessons can be learned from their process. Below, we describe both challenges faced by SPS and the advice they have offered.<sup>99</sup>

To start, SPS has faced communication challenges. The Safety and Security Department found that they, as a district, did not communicate the roles and responsibilities of SEOs to stakeholders, both within the district and the larger community, resulting in many not understanding what gaps would be created in their absence. Without clarity on what SEOs were doing daily, SPS found it difficult for everyone to be on the same page about what was needed in a new safety plan. In moving forward, SPS recommends strong communication efforts to ensure all stakeholders understand the roles and responsibilities of previous safety personnel before entering discussions on how to move forward.

Additionally, SPS' Safety and Security Department believes it is important to have communication networks with local law enforcement agencies. Although SPS believes strongly in addressing most safety issues without law enforcement assistance, the Safety and Security Department would caution that there still should be a relationship between the school district and local law enforcement. They believe that positive relationships allow for the most qualified officers to respond when law enforcement needs to be involved, and that strong communication channels ensure that schools, students, and families receive the best possible treatment.

Former SEOs continue to be strong contacts for SPS. The district has found that working with SEOs or similarly skilled officers results in better outcomes than a random responding patrol officer when schools call 911, especially for marginalized families. SPS plans to continue improving relationships with the local police department, and are hopeful that SPS will have defined a new relationship with Seattle Police Department within the next months that can replace the phased-out SEO relationship.

Another significant recommendation offered by a member of the SPS Safety and Security Department to those who are looking to implement new safety models is to position safety under the health umbrella. The SPS Safety and Security Department originally was created as a part of the district's Health Department, but now the

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<sup>98</sup>Seattle Public Schools. (2022, January 26). *Ethnic studies*. Retrieved June 15, 2022, from <https://www.seattleschools.org/departments/ethnic-studies/>

<sup>99</sup> SPS Safety and Security Department Official, personal communication, May 2, 2022.

department is under the Operations Department, alongside Nutrition Services and Custodians. While this design works for SPS due to their long-standing relationship with members of the Health Department, only the after-hour team that focuses on the school facilities fits well under Operations. The other School Security Specialists work best when they are paired with Behavioral Health Specialists, the mental health support staff, social workers, family support workers, and other staff that focus on student well-being. Therefore, the SPS Safety and Security Department recommends that student safety falls under health rather than operations, or that districts develop strong connections with student support staff.

## **Charlottesville City Schools, VA**

### **Background**

Charlottesville City Schools (CCS) cited concerns about racial disparities in student and police contact and the continuous protests in the summer of 2020 as the primary drivers to separate from law enforcement.<sup>100</sup> CCS schools transitioned to remote learning in March 2020, and in June 2020, shortly after the murder of George Floyd, the school board ended the district's contract with Charlottesville Police Department (CPD). Shortly after, CCS developed a School Safety and Security Resources Committee to explore alternative safety models. The committee, which included district staff and administration, parents, mental health professionals, community members, student liaisons, and a CPD liaison, held meetings from November 2020 to May 2021. During this time, the committee researched other district safety models, drawing heavily from Alexandria (VA) City Public Schools and Toronto (Ontario) District as models. The committee then conducted listening sessions and student surveys and discussed stakeholder feedback.<sup>101</sup>

The School Safety and Security Resource Committee's final recommendations were to reallocate the finances from the contract with CPD to create a system of support for students. This support included placing eight Care and Safety Assistants (CSAs) and 6.5 Social-Emotional Counselors in the district. The Board reached a joint agreement and approved the new safety plan on May 6, 2021. During the 2021 summer, CCS hired CSA personnel, restructured their safety department, and created a revised MOU with CPD.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> *Charlottesville discontinuing use of School Resource Officers*. NBC 29. (2020, June 11). Retrieved March 15, 2022, from <https://www.nbc29.com/2020/06/11/charlottesville-discontinuing-use-school-resource-officers/>

<sup>101</sup> Charlottesville City Schools . (2021, October 18). *School Safety Plan Archive*. Charlottesville City Schools. Retrieved May 23, 2022, from <http://charlottesvilleschools.org/school-safety-plan-archive/>

<sup>102</sup> Charlottesville City Schools. (2021, October 18). *School Safety Plan Archive*. Charlottesville City Schools. Retrieved May 23, 2022, from <http://charlottesvilleschools.org/school-safety-plan-archive/>



## Safety Personnel

### *Prior and current staffing*

CCS' safety model relied on four SROs, one SRO Supervisor, one Community Service Officer, and six Crossing Guards. According to the CCS School Safety and Security Resources Kick-Off Meeting, SROs assisted in responding to physical incidents for middle and high school students, allowed the district to avoid calling the police for minor incidents, served as liaisons for students and families in addressing community issues, and allowed more flexibility in how mandatory reporting to law enforcement was handled. Additionally, student/staff climate data found that most students appreciated the presence of SROs, and the district felt SROs could build positive relationships with students. However, the School Safety and Security Resources Committee described the cons of SROs as having negative impacts on marginalized students, contributing to a "surveillance culture," and required funding that could be better allocated for mental health resources.<sup>103</sup>

Currently, CCS employs eight CSAs. Five of these positions were hired, while three existing positions were transformed. There are now three CSAs at Buford Middle School, four at Charlottesville High School, and one at the McGinness Academy. Charlottesville High School has organized its CSAs to align with a specific grade level, or "cohort", to follow through the 4-year cycle to facilitate strong relationships between students and safety personnel.<sup>104</sup>

To support changes to the new safety plan, CCS reorganized the central office to expand safety and security-related staff. Previously, the Chief Operations Officer and their administrative tech assistant were responsible for all safety-related operations. This included reviewing crisis plans, ensuring schools were compliant with safety drills, and conducting annual safety audits. The department had also included a Supervisor of Housekeeping who focused on custodial-related aspects of the division. After the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Supervisor of Housekeeping retired, allowing CCS to repurpose this role to hire a Supervisor of Facilities, Safety, and Operations. The new supervisor has experience in developing crisis management plans and overseeing operations and professional development, allowing him to focus on implementing CCS' new safety model.

CCS emulated their organization of custodial staff for CSAs. Like custodial staff, CSAs have a lead for each school that reports to the school's principal. Additionally, there is a

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<sup>103</sup> Charlottesville City Schools. (2020, November). *Kick off Meeting* [PowerPoint Slides]. Charlottesville City Schools Safety and Security Resources.

[https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1pjw3wqsA0cRpwSgIpDrAxMoQMVU73vMDHr9HQhUua-4/edit#slide=id.g9fb0858ff6\\_0\\_144](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1pjw3wqsA0cRpwSgIpDrAxMoQMVU73vMDHr9HQhUua-4/edit#slide=id.g9fb0858ff6_0_144)

<sup>104</sup> CCS District Official, personal communication, May 18, 2022.

“dotted line” to the Supervisor of Facilities, Safety, and Operations, who also oversees the staff. This structure allows principals to make hiring decisions and adjust practices for their school’s needs, while also ensuring that CSA’s professional development and certifications are planned and implemented by the division such as other units in the school system.<sup>105</sup>

### *Roles and responsibilities*

The CCS school board has described CSAs as unarmed adults from the community with strong relationships with students, who can address conflicts and mental health concerns and uphold the school code of conduct.<sup>106</sup> Daily, CSAs monitor hallways, common areas, and entrances while assisting school visitors. Additionally, CSAs work to build strong, positive relationships with students and serve as a liaison between students and administrators. When conflicts arise, CSAs engage in de-escalation strategies and encourage prosocial communication. Further, they assist school administrators in serious incidents.

While the Code of Virginia allows school districts to decide whether they have armed personnel, there was a local community decision not to have armed CSAs. Additionally, CSAs did not wear uniforms during the 2021-2022 school year, but next year CSAs will have embroidered polo shirts and polished cotton (lightweight) vests that will identify them as CSAs. Furthermore, some CSAs have recently inquired about receiving Kevlar to wear under their clothes. In response, CCS is now providing the option for CSAs to be fitted for a Kevlar material vest to wear under their shirt. Vests are optional because CSAs are unarmed and not responsible for confronting an armed active threat.<sup>107</sup>

CCS’ new safety plan has not directly impacted the district’s liability insurance.<sup>108</sup>

### *Criteria for hire*

CCS requires CSAs to have at least 6 months of experience working with adolescents, familiarity with school operations and adolescent development, and connections to the Charlottesville community. Additionally, they must respond to crisis situations according to CCS policies and procedures. CPR, first aid, and relevant certifications are also

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<sup>105</sup> CCS District Official, personal communication, May 18, 2022.

<sup>106</sup> Charlottesville City Schools. (2021, April). *New Model Plan* [PowerPoint Slides]. Charlottesville City Schools Safety and Security Resources. [https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1Pb5OFdshnbqVWXhUpSnPgHL73n1vUqUt35QHoMAH-YM/edit#slide=id.gcbaa97cbc0\\_0\\_41](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1Pb5OFdshnbqVWXhUpSnPgHL73n1vUqUt35QHoMAH-YM/edit#slide=id.gcbaa97cbc0_0_41)

<sup>107</sup> CCS District Official, personal communication, June 6, 2022.

<sup>108</sup> CCS District Official, personal communication, May 18, 2022.

encouraged.<sup>109</sup> CCS found it important that not all CSAs were males and made efforts to hire females.<sup>110</sup>

### *Training*

Each CSA is trained in de-escalation skills, culturally responsive race and gender practices, mental health responses, restorative justice, and first aid, in addition to receiving specific training from the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services.<sup>111</sup> CCS prioritized training CSAs in de-escalation, Mandt (which involves mediation and de-escalation training), and an SSO Certification through the state's criminal justice services department. To do so, CCS planned for CSAs to be a 220-day position so that CSAs could be trained before the start of the school year.<sup>112</sup>

### *After school hours*

Some high schools elect to pay overtime to use CSAs for after-school programs. However, CCS still contracts to have officers at certain sporting events through what is known as extra-duty hours.<sup>113</sup>

## **Discipline Procedures/Crisis Response**

### *Formal agreement with law enforcement*

Part of the new safety plan includes a new MOU with the CPD that clearly defines when and under what conditions CCS will work with police officers. Under Virginia Code, Charlottesville City Schools are mandated to communicate and work with law enforcement in three areas: crisis plans, threat assessments, and mandatory reporting.<sup>114</sup> CCS' new MOU addresses the three interface areas as well as procedures involving: support for missing person investigations; lockdown or neighborhood alert situations; student elopement or wellness checks; incidents that require police presence, such as drugs, violence, and weapons; and the use of police support for

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<sup>109</sup> Charlottesville City Schools. (2021, April). *New Model Plan* [PowerPoint Slides]. Charlottesville City Schools Safety and Security Resources.

[https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1Pb5OFdshnbqVWXhUpSnPgHL73n1vUqUt35QH0MAH-YM/edit#slide=id.gcbaa97cbc0\\_0\\_41](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1Pb5OFdshnbqVWXhUpSnPgHL73n1vUqUt35QH0MAH-YM/edit#slide=id.gcbaa97cbc0_0_41)

<sup>110</sup> CCS District Official, personal communication, May 18, 2022.

<sup>111</sup> Charlottesville City Schools. (2021, April). *New Model Plan* [PowerPoint Slides]. Charlottesville City Schools Safety and Security Resources.

[https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1Pb5OFdshnbqVWXhUpSnPgHL73n1vUqUt35QH0MAH-YM/edit#slide=id.gcbaa97cbc0\\_0\\_41](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1Pb5OFdshnbqVWXhUpSnPgHL73n1vUqUt35QH0MAH-YM/edit#slide=id.gcbaa97cbc0_0_41)

<sup>112</sup> CCS District Official, personal communication, May 18, 2022.

<sup>113</sup> CCS District Official, personal communication, May 18, 2022.

<sup>114</sup> Charlottesville City Schools. (2021, April). *New Model Plan* [PowerPoint Slides]. Charlottesville City Schools Safety and Security Resources.

[https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1Pb5OFdshnbqVWXhUpSnPgHL73n1vUqUt35QH0MAH-YM/edit#slide=id.gcbaa97cbc0\\_0\\_41](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1Pb5OFdshnbqVWXhUpSnPgHL73n1vUqUt35QH0MAH-YM/edit#slide=id.gcbaa97cbc0_0_41)

security and traffic control at events. Additionally, the new MOU sets the procedures and protocols for how law enforcement can contact students under various circumstances.<sup>115</sup>

### *Mandatory reporting*

CCS is required to report numerous incidents to law enforcement. These incidents include the following categories:<sup>116</sup>

- Assault/battery involving death, shooting, stabbing, cutting or wounding
- Kidnapping/abduction
- Stalking
- Intent to sell/distribute or distribution of controlled substances (drugs and alcohol)
- Theft or attempted theft of student prescriptions
- Threat against school personnel - if a felony
- Illegal possession of firearms (as defined in § 22.1-277.07)
- Bombs/explosive or incendiary devices (real or hoax devices)
- Threats or false threats to bomb - if student is over 15
- Homicide
- Sexual assault or attempted sexual assault
- Actual or attempted robbery

As of 2020, some categories are optional to report based on the severity of assault/battery, the possession of controlled substances, threats or false bomb threats if the student is under the age of fifteen, and threats against school personnel depending on age, developmental capacity, and disability status.

### *Crisis response*

CCS follows the Virginia Student Threat Assessment Guidelines<sup>117</sup> and has a Threat Assessment Team headed by the principal or administrative designee of each school.

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<sup>115</sup> Charlottesville City Schools. (n.d.). *Charlottesville City Police & Schools Protocols*. Retrieved May 23, 2022, from <http://charlottesvilleschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/CCS-CPD-Protocols-FINAL-for-web.pdf>

<sup>116</sup> Charlottesville City Schools. (2020, November). *Kick off Meeting* [PowerPoint Slides]. Charlottesville City Schools Safety and Security Resources. [https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1pjw3wqsA0cRpwSglpDrAxMoQMVU73vMDHr9HQhUua-4/edit#slide=id.g9fb0858ff6\\_0\\_144](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1pjw3wqsA0cRpwSglpDrAxMoQMVU73vMDHr9HQhUua-4/edit#slide=id.g9fb0858ff6_0_144)

<sup>117</sup> University of Virginia. (2020, December 26). *The Comprehensive School Threat Assessment Guidelines*. School of Education and Human Development. Retrieved May 23, 2022, from <https://education.virginia.edu/faculty-research/centers-labs-projects/research-labs/youth-violence-project/comprehensive-school>

Threat Assessment Teams must include at least one guidance counselor, a school psychologist or social worker, an individual with expertise in instruction, and other staff members deemed appropriate. Under the Code of Virginia, teams must also include persons with expertise in law enforcement.<sup>118</sup>

Additionally, CCS developed new standardized School Crisis, Emergency Management, and Medical Emergency Response Plans and outside agencies are used as resources for the Schools' Crisis Management Teams. The Division Level Threat Assessment Team develops training content and protocols, as well as reviews threat assessment data for each school year. The division supervisor coordinates annual safety audits with the assistance of City and Regional Emergency Management personnel.

CCS's emergency safety plan includes building-specific security procedures, routine safety drills, and employee training. The plan also includes efforts to expand school-based staffing of counselors, social workers, and social-emotional counselors. CCS maintains strong relationships with CPD, and calls 911 for serious threats, real guns, and situations that staff cannot de-escalate. Staff can handle weapons such as blades by securing, disassembling, and disposing of the item without law enforcement involvement. However, if staff is made aware of a real gun, they will immediately call 911 and coordinate a response.<sup>119</sup>

### *Facilities*

CCS has continued to expand technology and redesign facilities with the use of available allocations and grant funds. Areas it continues to develop include Visitor Management Systems, Access Control Systems, Master Key Systems, and Camera Systems.<sup>120</sup>

### **Staff Support & Wraparound Services**

In addition to CSAs, CCS has hired 6.5 Social Emotional Support Counselors, one Facilities Operations and Safety Supervisor, and shifted crossing guards' employment from the CPD to CCS supervision.<sup>121</sup> CCS reallocated funds from the SRO program to

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<sup>118</sup> Charlottesville City Schools. (2020, November). *Kick off Meeting* [PowerPoint Slides]. Charlottesville City Schools Safety and Security Resources.

[https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1pjw3wqsA0cRpwSglpDrAxMoQMVU73vMDHr9HQhUua-4/edit#slide=id.g9fb0858ff6\\_0\\_144](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1pjw3wqsA0cRpwSglpDrAxMoQMVU73vMDHr9HQhUua-4/edit#slide=id.g9fb0858ff6_0_144)

<sup>119</sup> CCS District Official, personal communication, May 18, 2022.

<sup>120</sup> Charlottesville City Schools. (2021, April). *New Model Plan* [PowerPoint Slides]. Charlottesville City Schools Safety and Security Resources.

[https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1Pb5OFdshnbqVWXhUpSnPgHL73n1vUqUt35QHoMAH-YM/edit#slide=id.gcbaa97cbc0\\_0\\_41](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1Pb5OFdshnbqVWXhUpSnPgHL73n1vUqUt35QHoMAH-YM/edit#slide=id.gcbaa97cbc0_0_41)

<sup>121</sup> Knott, K. (2021, May 1). *Charlottesville ready to finalize plan for New School Safety Model Without SROs*. The Daily Progress. Retrieved April 1, 2022, from

pay for CSAs. New positions, as well as the cost of the crossing guards which now are paid for by the district, have been largely covered through funding received during the COVID-19 pandemic. The district is currently working to get these positions established in the regular budget.<sup>122</sup>

Prior to adopting the new safety model, CCS utilized programs that support mental health, intentional community-building, and a positive school climate. CCS continues to build on these programs through community partnerships and mental health staff. Examples include a partnership with the nonprofit Nature Playscape Wildrock, the Public Education Foundation, and the local nonprofit City Schoolyard Garden.<sup>123</sup>

### **School Climate/Culture**

CCS has incorporated programs to build a positive school climate and culture. In their 2017-2023 Strategic Plan, CCS emphasizes “Safe and Supportive Schools” through efforts to increase social, emotional, and physical wellness.<sup>124</sup> Additionally, CCS has implemented Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and follows a model of Virginia Tiered Systems of Supports.<sup>125</sup>

CCS’ new safety plan also includes efforts to expand training for all staff. All staff now receive longer restorative justice, trauma-responsive, culturally responsive, and adult social-emotional learning training, as well as annual online refresher courses. Additionally, CCS is working to incorporate more comprehensive de-escalation training for all staff in the next school year.<sup>126</sup>

### **Challenges/Lessons/Outcomes**

According to an official in the Facilities, Safety, and Operations Department, CCS has a strong base for its new safety model. However, they are continuing to improve communication and collaboration with law enforcement and hope to obtain the finances needed for mental health professionals to be established in the general budget.

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[https://dailyprogress.com/news/local/education/charlottesville-ready-to-finalize-plan-for-new-school-safety-model-without-sros/article\\_520b3804-a96b-11eb-886e-4f82ac8d72c1.html](https://dailyprogress.com/news/local/education/charlottesville-ready-to-finalize-plan-for-new-school-safety-model-without-sros/article_520b3804-a96b-11eb-886e-4f82ac8d72c1.html)

<sup>122</sup> CCS District Official, personal communication, May 18, 2022.

<sup>123</sup> Charlottesville City Schools . (2021, October 18). *School Safety Plan Archive*. Charlottesville City Schools. Retrieved May 23, 2022, from <http://charlottesvilleschools.org/school-safety-plan-archive/>

<sup>124</sup> *Strategic Plan 2017-2023*. Charlottesville City Schools. (n.d.). Retrieved May 23, 2022, from <http://charlottesvilleschools.org/home/about-ccs/publications/strategic-plan/>

<sup>125</sup> *Virginia Tiered Systems and Supports (VTSS) and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)*. Charlottesville City Schools. (n.d.). Retrieved May 23, 2022, from <http://charlottesvilleschools.org/supports>

<sup>126</sup> Charlottesville City Schools. (2021, April). *New Model Plan* [PowerPoint Slides]. Charlottesville City Schools Safety and Security Resources. [https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1Pb5OFdshnbqVWXhUpSnPgHL73n1vUqUt35QH0MAH-YM/edit#slide=id.gcbaa97cbc0\\_0\\_41](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1Pb5OFdshnbqVWXhUpSnPgHL73n1vUqUt35QH0MAH-YM/edit#slide=id.gcbaa97cbc0_0_41)

Although they are pleased with the many results of their new safety model, CCS continues to work to improve safety and security.<sup>127</sup>

The primary challenge faced by CCS since discontinuing the use of SROs has been navigating the loss of direct communication with law enforcement. CCS schools had SROs on the scene with radios to directly communicate with first responders. Since the discontinuation of the program, the Facilities, Safety, and Operations Department has had to figure out how to navigate communication with emergency responders. At first, many people within CCS felt frustrated when trying to communicate on 911 calls, but they have since developed a strategy and learned how to “speak the language.”<sup>128</sup>

The new strategy for incidents that require a 911 call is for the safety personnel on scene to identify one person (administrator, guidance counselor, etc.) to be the point person for communications, known as COMMS. The person identified as “having COMMS” is responsible for calling 911 and reporting on the scene, while other staff continue to engage with the students. By doing so, staff can focus on the issue at hand, while the person identified as having COMMS can inform first responders without interruption. As a district official explained, “the primary job of the COMMS person is to be the human radio because we lost that person with the radio.”<sup>129</sup>

Another aspect of CCS’ new communication strategy includes a standing monthly meeting between the Chief Operations Officer, their administrative assistant, the Supervisor for Facilities, Safety, and Operations, and first responder liaisons from CPD and Charlottesville Fire Department. These meetings may become quarterly as CCS’ new safety model becomes more established. Additionally, the Chief Operations Officer has relationships with many CPD officers of various ranks who they can call or text if there is a situation that needs to be discussed but does not require an immediate officer response. CCS has also developed a relationship with CPD to a point where the safety department can call for officer(s) to stage (in their office, in the parking lot, etc.) if there is an incident that is escalating or may escalate but it is unclear if CPD support will be needed.<sup>130</sup>

CCS has learned the importance of having a designated COMMS person when a crisis event is happening in a school and are working to maintain and develop relationships with CPD. The main advice CCS offers districts developing a new safety model is to find a strong way to communicate with emergency responders.

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<sup>127</sup> CCS District Official, personal communication, May 18, 2022.

<sup>128</sup> CCS District Official, personal communication, May 18, 2022.

<sup>129</sup> CCS District Official, personal communication, May 18, 2022.

<sup>130</sup> CCS District Official, personal communication, June 6, 2022.

## **Minneapolis Public Schools, MN**

### **Background**

Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS) was one of the first districts to end its \$1.1 million annual contract with the Minneapolis Police Department after the protest surrounding the death of George Floyd in 2020.<sup>131</sup> There has been a long history of animosity between the Minneapolis Police Department and communities of color. For years, community groups and stakeholders pushed for changes within the police department, such as softer uniforms or more training. Students, organizations, activists, and the NAACP discussed changes to MPS safety, but it was not until the murder of George Floyd that MPS realized they could no longer continue to employ police officers within their schools due to feelings of mistrust and friction between students and law enforcement.<sup>132</sup> MPS launched multiple surveys and engagement campaigns to receive community feedback.<sup>133</sup>

On June 2, 2020, the MPS board voted to end its contract with the Minneapolis Police Department. The result was a safety model that now relies on Emergency Management Safety and Security Specialists.<sup>134</sup> MPS officially made the transition to Emergency Management Safety and Security Specialists in 2 months, having their department up and running by September 2020.<sup>135</sup>

### **Safety Personnel**

#### *Prior and current staffing*

MPS has used SRO programs since the 1960s. At the height of the program, there were an estimated 16 full-time SROs, and at least another eight part-time officers who provided security at high schools. On any given day, there could be around 24 officers assigned to the district. The structure of the program remained relatively unchanged over the years. MPS had a contractual relationship with the Minneapolis Police

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<sup>131</sup> Faircloth, R. (2020, June 3). *Minneapolis Public Schools terminates contract with police department over George Floyd's death*. Retrieved January 4, 2022, from <https://www.startribune.com/mpls-school-board-ends-contract-with-police-for-school-resource-officers/570967942/>

<sup>132</sup> Fernands, P. (2021, February 26). *What is the new role of the Public Safety Support Specialists that MPS has been hiring?* The Southerner. Retrieved May 23, 2022, from <https://www.shsoutherner.net/features/2021/02/26/what-is-the-new-role-of-the-public-safety-support-specialists-that-mpls-has-been-hiring/>

<sup>133</sup> Zhang, A. (2020, June 4). *Minneapolis decided to remove police from schools after decades of criticism*. Slate Magazine. Retrieved May 23, 2022, from <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2020/06/minneapolis-remove-police-from-schools-history.html>

<sup>134</sup> MPS Emergency Management, Safety, and Security Official, personal communication, May 10, 2022.

<sup>135</sup> MPS Emergency Management, Safety, and Security Official, personal communication, May 10, 2022.



Department in which the district paid 75% of the salaries for officers and supervisors assigned to the district, and the city covered the remaining 25%. MPS had additional contracts for off-duty officers, primarily for event security. Because the off-duty officers served as independent contractors, they were not bound by the same contract language, training, or practices as the SROs.<sup>136</sup>

MPS worked to create a clear boundary between SRO responsibilities and student discipline. SROs focused primarily on outside threats, helped schools plan and prepare for emergencies, and provided student programming. Discipline and student behaviors were the purview of MPS staff, and SROs were only engaged in events that were beyond the ability of staff to handle.

Nearly 8 years ago, MPS ended the use of off-duty officers and reduced their SROs from 16 to 12, which is the number of SROs employed when the district ended their contract in 2020. At the time, the district spent approximately \$1.3 million on police services. While MPS' safety department recognized positive experiences from the SRO programs, such as their "Bike Cops for Kids" program and an SRO who led a sports team to a state championship, the department recognized that their duty-bound oath required officers to enforce the law when asked, contributing to students being pushed out of school.<sup>137</sup>

After the murder of George Floyd, MPS made models and cost-analysis of various safety strategies. They examined what a fully armed security team would cost in comparison to a fully unarmed security team, and examined models being developed by other schools. The MPS safety department decided they would not create their own police force because, first, "it's just changing who put the uniform on" making it not politically logical, and second, it was clear that the use of their own police force did not make sense cost or risk/liability wise.<sup>138</sup> The result was the creation of Emergency Management Safety and Security Specialists (formerly titled Public Safety Support Specialists). MPS currently has 13 Emergency Management Safety and Security Specialists and two managers. Each specialist supports multiple schools based on geography (not grade level), and they operate as first responders.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> MPS Emergency Management, Safety, and Security Official, personal communication, May 10, 2022.

<sup>137</sup> MPS Emergency Management, Safety, and Security Official, personal communication, May 10, 2022.

<sup>138</sup> MPS Emergency Management, Safety, and Security Official, personal communication, May 10, 2022.

<sup>139</sup> MPS Emergency Management, Safety, and Security Official, personal communication, May 10, 2022.

### *Roles and responsibilities*

Student behavior is not the purview of specialists. Rather, specialists are trained in emergency response and management to help schools prepare and manage critical situations which would otherwise likely lead to a police call. Daily, specialists visit buildings to ensure plans are in place and help prepare and train staff. While specialists are expected to engage with students, they are not expected to do the work of mental health specialists or police student behavior. Specialists have the option to wear a polo shirt with the department logo, but the only requirement is a lanyard for an ID with the department's information on it. It was an intentional decision to not have specialists in uniform. The department does not want specialists to be seen as a direct replacement for law enforcement, and they recognize that uniforms are a “first level of force.” A uniform presence often asserts power, and the department would prefer specialists to use their de-escalation skills and relationships to respond to conflicts. In addition, specialists do not have belts, badges, tasers, handcuffs, or carry any other equipment.<sup>140</sup>

### *Criteria for hire*

The safety department intentionally hires individuals who have lived experiences that mirror that of many MPS students. Additionally, the department believes it is important to have a team with individuals with varying backgrounds, experiences, and levels of education. The most important criterion of a specialist is someone who is comfortable responding to a crisis, can manage situations through de-escalation, and can serve as a buffer between schools and law enforcement.<sup>141</sup>

### *Training*

MPS uses the nonviolent crisis intervention training known as CPI. MPS is also one of the only places in the world that has been allowed to modify the curriculum to insert much more work around equity, social-emotional learning, and multi-tiered system support. Previously, only special education teachers were given this training. However, MPS now provides the training for entire school buildings, which includes a yearly refresher course. This creates a school culture where everyone uses the same language and has a common understanding. It also allows all staff to have the skills to respond to manageable situations without relying on law enforcement.

Specialists undergo 2 weeks of additional training prior to stepping into the role. They receive 2 weeks of internal training, one week of risk assessment training focused on

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<sup>140</sup> MPS Emergency Management, Safety, and Security Official, personal communication, May 10, 2022.

<sup>141</sup> MPS Emergency Management, Safety, and Security Official, personal communication, May 10, 2022.

the physical security of buildings, and one week of training with the organization Nonviolent Peaceforce. While Nonviolent Peaceforce is an organization that works around the world, specifically in refugee camps or war-torn areas, the MPS safety department has found value in the organization's ability to train groups for skills to organize, protect, and keep themselves safe with things such as asset building and relationships.<sup>142</sup> Additionally, specialists read books such as Isabel Wilkerson's "The Warmth of Other Suns" and literature by Black Lives Matter leaders during remote schooling.<sup>143</sup>

### *After-school hours*

MPS is currently working to find the best model to provide safety for after-school activities and sporting events. Since students have returned to campuses, MPS has engaged community groups, such as violence interrupter groups and civilians who work in street outreach, to improve events. Because the safety department has limited staff, they do not assign specialists to after-school activities unless there is a high-risk or last-minute need. Even with smaller crowds at events, many adults in the community wanted a law enforcement presence. The safety department looked into bringing officers back but found it monetarily unfeasible. Additionally, they found that having other armed staff presents too much liability for the district, and other law enforcement groups (such as the county sheriffs) will not engage due to fear of stepping over the Minneapolis Police Department. Currently, creating safety plans for after-school activities and sporting events is still in the works.

### **Discipline Procedures/Crisis Response**

Fights and drugs are the most common incidents seen within MPS. Most incidents are handled with de-escalation techniques within the building. Only as a last resort are physical restraints used and are ideally done with a team. Although all staff is trained in CPI, teachers can opt-in or out of learning physical restraint techniques. Even if they are trained, teachers are never asked to use these interventions unless a student's life or immediate health is endangered. Additionally, while suspensions occur, the safety department encourages that suspensions are seen only as a way to plan for how students can safely return to learning, not as a punishment tool. Specialists work to

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<sup>142</sup> MPS Emergency Management, Safety, and Security Official, personal communication, May 10, 2022.

<sup>143</sup> Sheasley, C. (2021, April 20). *In a roiled Minneapolis, schools are testing new model for safety*. The Christian Science Monitor. Retrieved May 23, 2022, from <https://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Education/2021/0420/In-a-roiled-Minneapolis-schools-are-testing-new-model-for-safety>

encourage the school to follow best practices and due process for students when incidents occur.<sup>144</sup>

### *Formal agreement with law enforcement*

MPS operates differently than other school districts, as MPS is considered an autonomous structure. This means that unlike other big districts, MPS does not answer to the city mayor or city council, resulting in MPS needing more intentional partnerships with organizations.

MPS was unsuccessful in creating an MOU with law enforcement, and it is clear that MPS faces challenges and inconsistencies without formal agreements. For example, previously if police wanted to pick up a student for a crime outside of school, MPS relied on the SROs in the building to manage the situation in accordance with strict guidelines. Now, without SROs, police can directly call a principal, who may or may not allow the officer to pick up a student. Unclear policies and procedures have led to numerous inconsistencies in how law enforcement engages with students throughout MPS. Although the district did not have data to share, the MPS Emergency Management, Safety, and Security Department has found when things operate inconsistently, marginalized students suffer the most.<sup>145</sup>

### *Mandatory reporting*

Minnesota state law requires schools to report firearms and incidents of sexual assault. However, the guidelines for how this is done in practice are unclear. For instance, there is no timeframe for when a firearm must be reported. Therefore, the district could manage the incident internally, perhaps even letting the student go before calling law enforcement. However, this assumes a student willingly volunteers the firearm, and if they do, then the safety department faces the challenge of having staff available who are comfortable handling a firearm.

Additionally, for sexual assault incidents, the district is required to report the incident to both the state and law enforcement. However, the district does not necessarily have to call the police, but rather can report the incident to the state, who will then report the incident to the police. Yet, handling sexual assault incidents has proven to be a challenge for MPS. There are no clear guidelines for who leads the investigation on student sexual assault incidents. If the district defers to law enforcement, the district will not necessarily receive notes or updates. If the district begins an internal investigation, they risk stepping on evidence that the police might later need. While MPS has a Title

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<sup>144</sup> MPS Emergency Management, Safety, and Security Official, personal communication, May 10, 2022.

<sup>145</sup> MPS Emergency Management, Safety, and Security Official, personal communication, May 10, 2022.

IX office, investigations take time, and due process for a student needs to begin immediately.<sup>146</sup>

### *Crisis response*

Notably, MPS has not made changes to active shooter protocols because they believe law enforcement would respond to such an incident. The safety department notes concern about the ability to coordinate with law enforcement if such an event occurred. Additionally, MPS is in conversation with their insurance provider, but it appears that their new safety model has not resulted in changes to their insurance. The safety department did find, however, that if they had chosen to employ internally armed staff then there would have been a significant liability increase. However, not having the police, or not having armed security has not necessarily changed anything.<sup>147</sup>

### *Facilities*

MPS is in the process of making changes to its facilities in accordance with national best practices but has not made physical changes as a response to the lack of officers.

### **Staff Support & Wraparound Services**

Current and former students responded to an online survey prior to MPS' school board vote on the use of SROs. More than 2,000 individuals responded, of which 97% of former students and 88% of current students supported removing SROs. Respondents stated they wanted more school counselors, social workers, mental health services, restorative justice practices, and teachers of color.<sup>148</sup>

However, as seen with the MPS educator strike in March 2022, there is still a strong desire for increased staff support and wraparound services. Members of the Minneapolis Federation of Teachers and Emotional Support Professionals went on a nearly three-week strike to demand higher starting wages for educators, decreased class size ratios, and more mental health support professionals. Specifically, the teachers' federation demanded that a social worker and school counselor were employed onsite at each school daily, rather than having part-time staff rotate among

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<sup>146</sup> MPS Emergency Management, Safety, and Security Official, personal communication, May 10, 2022.

<sup>147</sup> MPS Emergency Management, Safety, and Security Official, personal communication, May 10, 2022.

<sup>148</sup> Sheasley, C. (2021, April 20). *In a roiled Minneapolis, schools are testing new model for safety*. The Christian Science Monitor. Retrieved May 23, 2022, from <https://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Education/2021/0420/In-a-roiled-Minneapolis-schools-are-testing-new-model-for-safety>.

multiple schools.<sup>149</sup> Currently, MPS has a 1-to-1,000 psychologist-to-student ratio and a 1-to-500 school counselor-to-student ratio, double the recommendation of the American School Counselor Association.

The agreed-on contract between the educators on strike and MPS included increasing pay for teachers and educational assistants, and hours for the latter, as well as some improvement to mental health support. The new contract will double the number of elementary schools with a school counselor, and the school psychologist to student ratio will now be approximately 1-to-850 rather than 1-to-1,000.<sup>150</sup> However, the new contract has not addressed the student-to-counselor ratio. Instead, funding for counselors and social workers will have to come out of school budgets, resulting in some positions being cut next school year. Southwest High School, for example, will lose two out of five counselor positions, resulting in a 1-to-525 counselor-to-student ratio.<sup>151</sup> MPS will have to continue to navigate budget cuts, despite the clear desire among students and educators for increased staff support and wrap-around services.

### **School Climate/Culture**

MPS has worked for many years to develop a positive school climate and culture. These efforts include Gay Straight Alliance Curriculum, partnerships with the Department of Indian Education, bullying prevention efforts, and creation of the Office of Black Student Achievement. More recently, MPS has expanded and changed the Office of Black Student Achievement to include support for young Black women.<sup>152</sup> Additionally, the MPS 2021-2023 Achievement and Integration Plan has outlined efforts to reduce disparities in academic achievement. Specifically, the 2021-2023 plan “includes a variety of district-wide strategies including magnet schools, AVID, climate framework and social-emotional learning, ethnic studies and curriculum transformation, and recruitment and retention of staff of color.”<sup>153</sup>

MPS is also considering creative ways to increase school culture around safety. An example of MPS’ efforts to improve school climate is a new effort to educate students in

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<sup>149</sup> Kian, A. (2022, April 8). *How do strikers envision improving the mental health of Minneapolis students?* Minn Post. Retrieved May 27, 2022, from <https://www.minnpost.com/race-health-equity/2022/03/how-do-strikers-envision-improving-the-mental-health-of-minneapolis-students/>

<sup>150</sup> Bloomquist, M., & Keefer, W. (2022, March 28). *Minneapolis Teachers Union Strike ends.* Mpls.St.Paul Magazine. Retrieved May 27, 2022, from <https://mspmag.com/arts-and-culture/minneapolis-teachers-union-strike-ends/>

<sup>151</sup> Kian, A., Callaghan, P., & Orenstein, W. (2022, May 5). *Counseling positions to be cut at Minneapolis’ Southwest High; student ratio could jump by 100 students.* Minn Post. Retrieved May 27, 2022, from <https://www.minnpost.com/race-health-equity/2022/05/counseling-positions-to-be-cut-at-minneapolis-southwest-high-student-ratio-could-jump-by-100-students/>

<sup>152</sup> Minneapolis Public Schools. (n.d.). *Action Plan.* Retrieved May 27, 2022, from [https://blackmales.mpls.k12.mn.us/action\\_plan](https://blackmales.mpls.k12.mn.us/action_plan)

<sup>153</sup> Minneapolis Public Schools. (n.d.). *Achievement and Integration Plan.* Retrieved May 27, 2022, from [https://equity.mpls.k12.mn.us/achievement\\_and\\_integration](https://equity.mpls.k12.mn.us/achievement_and_integration)

nonviolent conflict mediation. As described previously, specialists receive training from the organization Nonviolent Peaceforce, which provides safety skills around the world, specifically in refugee camps and war-torn areas. Now, MPS is working to have student groups receive similar training. While an Emergency Management, Safety, and Security Department official wants to make it clear that they do not compare MPS students to students in refugee camps, they also recognize that many similar characteristics are useful. For instance, students, like those in refugee camps, are required to be at a designated location, are surrounded by people with a higher power differential who do not always fully understand the students (or refugees), are often exposed to violence within the structure or surrounding the structure, and are undoubtedly influenced by these conditions. Understanding these overlaps, the MPS safety department believes the concepts of Nonviolent Peaceforce are useful, so much so that they are beginning to establish it within two high schools in the district. According to a district official, students have advocated for this initiative, and safety team members are working to give students Nonviolent Peaceforce training so students can mediate conflicts without violence.<sup>154</sup>

### **Challenges/Lessons/Outcomes**

According to the Emergency Management, Safety, and Security Department, there are two main challenges MPS has faced in implementing its new safety model.

The first challenge is navigating the need for law enforcement. Although MPS finds they are making positive changes, they admit that separating from law enforcement has left some holes that need to be filled. Specifically, MPS is navigating the loss of direct lines of communication they previously had with SROs, and technical decisions such as how to dispose of contraband materials confiscated from students.

The second challenge MPS faces is regarding school culture and climate. According to one district official, “it is not a school safety problem, it is a school climate problem.”<sup>155</sup> In other words, MPS is not aligned in all areas that manage school climate. The safety department argues that in addition to making changes in their department, there needs to be more emphasis on changing how other staff, faculty, and adults in the building think about safety. Understandably, teachers and staff already have a lot to manage, especially during a global pandemic. However, the safety department argues that until all adults in the district are willing to embrace new practices, then nothing done within a safety and security model will be effective. MPS is working to develop strategies around

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<sup>154</sup> MPS Emergency Management, Safety, and Security Official, personal communication, May 10, 2022.

<sup>155</sup> MPS Emergency Management, Safety, and Security Official, personal communication, May 10, 2022.

expanding conceptualizations of safety and fostering a positive school climate within individual schools.

Furthermore, MPS officially made their transition from SROs to specialists in 2 months, when ideally, they say, it would have been a 2-to-3-year transition. Due to their experience with a quick transition, the MPS safety department has offered significant advice for any district considering a new safety model. While the timeline depends on what districts already have in place, the first step MPS finds essential is to develop clear roles and responsibilities.

The safety department suggests that the first step to creating a successful new safety model is to outline what the model will be, and who, exactly, will be running the model. Before writing an MOU with a department or creating a job description, there needs to be time spent figuring out who is responsible, who is accountable, who is informed, and who is consulted for any potential incident within the district. The department recommends districts spend the time (up to a year if they have the ability) to map out any situation that could happen within a building, pick the ideal way the district wants it handled, and then clearly state who is responsible.

Examples of this would include figuring out who is responsible if a student brings a weapon to school, who is responsible for investigating sexual assault incidents, and even mapping out who, specifically, is responsible for recess. MPS notes that it is important for every department of the school to work together, especially with prevention efforts. However, for a successful safe school environment, there needs to be clear guidelines for who is in charge up to the cabinet-level. This step can be done with a simple document, such as a RACI Matrix (RACI stands for Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, and Informed), but MPS' safety department argues it is essential to understand who "owns" the bigger plan.

MPS cautions that there will not be an easy plug-and-play form. Rather, districts need to take the time to work through the process to understand the systems and how they align or do not. Importantly, a safety model should be developed to fit within the plans, not the other way around.

## **West Contra Costa County Schools, CA**

### **Background**

The decision to remove police from the West Contra Costa Unified School District (WCCUSD) stemmed from efforts by the Contra Costa County Racial Justice Coalition and the RYSE Youth Center, which successfully contributed to the passing of the



Positive School Climate Policy in 2017.<sup>156</sup> The Positive School Climate Policy aims to address racial disparities by using restorative and social-emotional responses to student behaviors.<sup>157</sup> This set the groundwork for the WCCUSD to end its contract with local police agencies in June 2020. The WCCUSD resolution cited police brutality and an effort to pass the district's \$377 million budget as reasons to discontinue the use of SROs.<sup>158</sup>

## **Safety Personnel**

### *Prior and current staffing*

Prior to the resolution, there were 11 SROs and 44 unarmed campus security officers stationed in WCCUSD schools. The SRO role had changed significantly over the years. In the past, SROs were often called into classrooms to engage with students labeled defiant, sometimes resulting in SROs using tactics such as handcuffing and pepper-spraying students when they did not comply.<sup>159</sup> Due to community concerns about SROs' role in school discipline matters, WCCUSD made efforts to define the scope of SRO responsibilities more clearly. Before the district discontinued the program, SROs primarily focused on providing law enforcement-related programs to kids and providing extra support to campus security as needed. SROs worked out of offices on school campuses.<sup>160</sup>

WCCUSD has relied on School Security Officers for many years. Starting as Student Supervisors and Site Supervisors, the position evolved into School Security Officers and are now referred to as Campus Safety Officers (CSOs). While the responsibilities of these positions remain similar, WCCUSD changed the title and appearance of officers to have a softer perception.<sup>161</sup> Since discontinuing the use of SROs, WCCUSD has expanded its reliance on CSOs. There are now roughly five safety officers at each high school.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Tadayon, A. (2020, August 5). *West Contra Costa unified to rethink student safety after ending police contracts*. EdSource. Retrieved March 15, 2022, from <https://edsource.org/2020/west-contra-costa-unified-to-rethink-student-safety-after-ending-police-contracts/637641>

<sup>157</sup> West Contra Costa Unified School District. (2017, November). *Educational Services / Positive School Climate policy*. Retrieved March 15, 2022, from <https://www.wccusd.net/Page/10830>

<sup>158</sup> West Contra Costa Unified School District . (2020). *West Contra Costa Unified School District Resolution NO. 104-1920 Condemning Police Violence and Brutality Against People of Color*. Richmond, CA. <https://www.cta.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/2020-06-10-R1-UTR-Resolution-No.-104-1920-Condernation-of-Police-Brutality.pdf>

<sup>159</sup> WCCUSD Safety Department Official, personal communication, May 11, 2022.

<sup>160</sup> WCCUSD Safety Department Official, personal communication, May 11, 2022.

<sup>161</sup> WCCUSD Safety Department Official, personal communication, May 11, 2022.

<sup>162</sup> WCCUSD Safety Department Official, personal communication, May 11, 2022.

### *Roles and responsibilities*

Most safety-related behaviors were handled by CSOs prior to ending WCCUSD's SRO program. According to a district official, most student behavior issues were addressed by CSOs who had built relationships with students and SROs only intervened as needed. Even weapon-related incidents were commonly addressed by CSOs, including securing the weapon and transferring it to SROs.

WCCUSD's new safety model has relied on the expansion and development of its safety officers. While CSOs were encouraged to create relationships with students before the new model, WCCUSD now states that relationships are their number one priority. Like other districts explored in this research, WCCUSD has found that a relational model has been effective in providing school safety. To encourage strong relationships, CSOs operate in quadrants of school sites and are assigned classrooms to engage and communicate with throughout the day.

CSOs patrol assigned areas of campus and assure that "students are safe, orderly, and within supervised areas." They are responsible for enforcing school rules, investigating criminal activity, breaking up student conflicts, and writing referrals and detention slips as necessary. Additionally, CSOs report student, personnel, and public incidents to district administrators and local law enforcement agencies.<sup>163</sup>

### *Criteria for hire*

Many CSOs were employed by the district before ending the use of SROs. WCCUSD's job description states CSOs need knowledge of "basic methods of individual and group supervision," "basic interests, attitudes, and emotional development of adolescents," "health and safety regulations," "interpersonal skills using tact, patience and courtesy," and basic first aid and CPR. Additionally, CSOs need knowledge of "PROACT or current restraint training specified by the district." WCCUSD requires 2 years at an accredited college or university with an emphasis in behavioral or social science, or 2 years of experience supervising youth in a school setting. Further, CSOs must have a permit, known as a Guard Card, to work as licensed unarmed security guards.<sup>164</sup>

### *Training*

WCCUSD's new safety model builds on CSOs' skills with frequent and expansive training. CSOs are regularly trained in de-escalation techniques, sensitive student

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<sup>163</sup> West Contra Costa Unified School District. (2010). Campus Security Officer I. Richmond, CA. <https://www.edjoin.org/JobDescriptions/96/Campus%20Security%20Officers.%20I-20150302141151.pdf>

<sup>164</sup> West Contra Costa Unified School District. (2010). Campus Security Officer I. Richmond, CA. <https://www.edjoin.org/JobDescriptions/96/Campus%20Security%20Officers.%20I-20150302141151.pdf>

response, and crisis intervention. Additionally, CSOs are divided into four groups, with groups receiving training on a weekly rotation. Training covers various topics (such as relationship building and student use of technology) to keep CSOs aware and up to date with how to manage new situations. Additionally, CSOs attend weekly meetings on site and monthly meetings at the district level to discuss and debrief recent concerns or occurrences.<sup>165</sup>

### *After-school hours*

It is unclear how WCCUSD is providing safety at after-school events and activities at this time.

## **Discipline Procedures/Crisis Response**

### *Formal agreement with law enforcement*

WCCUSD appears to have no formalized agreement with local law enforcement agencies. That said, WCCUSD works closely with law enforcement in situations that fall outside the district's capacity. According to a district official, WCCUSD works to maintain a strong relationship with the local law enforcement agency.<sup>166</sup>

### *Mandatory reporting*

WCCUSD is required under California Education Code to report specific student behavior to law enforcement. These behaviors include the possession, influence, or sale of alcohol or controlled substances, or the possession of a dangerous weapon, explosive, or firearm. However, under Education Code section 489025, these situations only require notification to law enforcement after "suspension or referral for expulsion" and if the school chooses not to suspend or refer a student for expulsion, "then notification is not required."<sup>167</sup> By this definition, the district has legal flexibility to use alternative interventions to suspensions or expulsions for these circumstances involving student behavior that does not require notifying law enforcement.

### *Crisis response*

CSOs are responsible for addressing most incidents within schools. If issues exceed the school's capacity to respond, Rovers are dispatched to the school site from a central office. Rovers are a team of safety officers that often respond to outside threats, such

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<sup>165</sup> Campus Security Officer Supervisor for WCCUSD, personal communication, May 11, 2022.

<sup>166</sup> WCCUSD Safety Department Official, personal communication, May 11, 2022.

<sup>167</sup> West Contra Costa Unified School District. (n.d.). District Expectations for Student Success. Richmond, CA. p.13. Retrieved March 10, 2022, from [https://www.wccusd.net/cms/lib/CA01001466/Centricity/Domain/33/Discipline%20Matrix%20Revision%20080718\\_1.pdf](https://www.wccusd.net/cms/lib/CA01001466/Centricity/Domain/33/Discipline%20Matrix%20Revision%20080718_1.pdf)

as disgruntled parents or trespassers. Rover support will address and de-escalate incidents before they require a call to the local police department.

However, if there is an emergency or serious situation, the district calls 911. The district plans to “work with police departments to foster healthy relationships,” and “expects police will respond to emergency calls in a timely manner.”<sup>168</sup> According to a district official, schools will go on lockdown for incidents that are out of hand and then call for police support. The school making the call will share its protocols with the police and collaborate to decide how to best approach the situation.<sup>169</sup>

### *Facilities*

WCCUSD made changes to facilities, such as having one point of entry and requiring badged entry, prior to separating from SROs.<sup>170</sup>

### **Staff Support & Wraparound Services**

WCCUSD has added three social workers and two Board Certified Behavior Analysts to their district.<sup>171</sup> Additionally, the district has outlined long-term safety strategies and will continue to rely on collaboration with community organizations to help inform plans moving forward. WCCUSD’s long-term strategies include fully functioning School Safety and Climate teams at every school, monitoring school climate trends, developing structured and explicit social-emotional learning programs in classrooms, investing in mental health supports, and continuing to develop a centralized team to support students’ social, emotional, and behavioral health.

Other district initiatives include Full Service Community Schools and partnering with community organizations. WCCUSD received a CA Community Schools Partnership Program Implementation Grant that will add intervention and support staff to the district and provide restorative practice and multi-tiered system of supports training for all staff, teachers, and administrators. The grant will also include parent capacity building and family resource center. Furthermore, WCCUSD has outlined their Nancy Skinner Budget Request, which would include assigning Restorative Practitioners to school

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<sup>168</sup> Tadayon, A. (2020, August 5). *West Contra Costa unified to rethink student safety after ending police contracts*. EdSource. Retrieved March 15, 2022, from <https://edsources.org/2020/west-contra-costa-unified-to-rethink-student-safety-after-ending-police-contracts/637641>

<sup>169</sup> WCCUSD Safety Department Official, personal communication, May 11, 2022.

<sup>170</sup> WCCUSD Safety Department Official, personal communication, May 11, 2022.

<sup>171</sup> West Contra Costa Unified School District. (2022, April). *Community Safety Forum* [PowerPoint Slides]. WCCUSD. [https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1BedtnMRHrjvT-TApZ-sjQoN46u46la9X8qBF-b26IA/edit#slide=id.g12240b08edc\\_0\\_8](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1BedtnMRHrjvT-TApZ-sjQoN46u46la9X8qBF-b26IA/edit#slide=id.g12240b08edc_0_8)

sites, adding social/emotional/mental health providers, and using a data system to identify students that need additional support.<sup>172</sup>

WCCUSD also collaborates with the RYSE Center, a youth organization that has made school climate recommendations to the district. The RYSE Center has stated that they intend to collect suspension and disciplinary data from the district to better inform district decisions. Similarly, the African American Site Advisory Team, which is made up of parents in the district, will continue to stay involved and issue policy recommendations to the district.<sup>173</sup>

### **School Climate/Culture**

According to a district official, students returned to school after being in remote learning with more anxiety, stress, and mental health problems. It is believed that this has led to a rise in weapon-related incidents within the district. As a response, the district is working hard to rebuild the relationships and trust that existed with students prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Part of this effort includes encouraging CSOs to create strong connections with students and building on previous district policies, such as the Positive School Climate Policy.

Created in 2017, WCCUSD established a Positive School Climate Policy that outlined the negative impacts the delinquency system has on students and outlined steps to limit the role of law enforcement in addressing minor school-related behaviors. The resolution stated that the district will only refer students to law enforcement as a last resort and pushed the district to redirect funding for law enforcement towards reducing class sizes and implementing restorative justice practices.<sup>174</sup> The goals of the Positive School Climate Policy were expanded in the district's resolution to end their contract with local law enforcement.

After ending the contract with local law enforcement, WCCUSD transferred the estimated \$1.5 million budgeted for police services for the 2020-2021 academic year to support Black student achievement programs.<sup>175</sup> In addition to these programs,

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<sup>172</sup> West Contra Costa Unified School District. (2022, April). *Community Safety Forum* [PowerPoint Slides]. WCCUSD. [https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1BedtnMRHrjvbT-TApZ-sjQoN46u46la9X8qBF-b26lA/edit#slide=id.g12240b08edc\\_0\\_8](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1BedtnMRHrjvbT-TApZ-sjQoN46u46la9X8qBF-b26lA/edit#slide=id.g12240b08edc_0_8)

<sup>173</sup> Tadayon, A. (2020, August 5). *West Contra Costa unified to rethink student safety after ending police contracts*. EdSource. Retrieved March 15, 2022, from <https://edsource.org/2020/west-contra-costa-unified-to-rethink-student-safety-after-ending-police-contracts/637641>

<sup>174</sup> West Contra Costa Unified School District. (2020). *West Contra Costa Unified School District Resolution NO. 104-1920 Condemning Police Violence and Brutality Against People of Color*. Richmond, CA. <https://www.cta.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/2020-06-10-R1-UTR-Resolution-No.-104-1920-Condemnation-of-Police-Brutality.pdf>

<sup>175</sup> Tadayon, A. (2020, August 5). *West Contra Costa unified to rethink student safety after ending police contracts*. EdSource. Retrieved March 15, 2022, from <https://edsource.org/2020/west-contra-costa-unified-to-rethink-student-safety-after-ending-police-contracts/637641>

WCCUSD enacted new anti-racist policies and training for administrators and staff to identify characteristics of White supremacy culture and confront racial biases and inequalities in the school context.<sup>176</sup>

### **Challenges/Lessons/Outcomes**

Since the Robb Elementary School mass shooting in May 2022, WCCUSD has made adjustments to reassure students and families of their safety. Superintendent Kenneth Chris Hurst emphasized the district's current efforts which include visible identification for everyone on campus, random locker checks, and efforts to identify at-risk students to provide additional support. Hurst also stated the district is working to develop long-term strategies to increase students' mental health and well-being and social-emotional learning programs while highlighting the district's focus on school sites' access points and security. Notably, the day following the Robb Elementary School mass shooting, Richmond police increased patrols and visibility near WCCUSD schools.<sup>177</sup>

WCCUSD held community safety meetings to further develop their safety model in April 2022. These meetings included discussions around how to best handle weapons confiscated from students and concerns over recent safety issues. It appears that community discussions and adjustments to safety efforts will continue for WCCUSD.<sup>178</sup>

## **Madison Metropolitan School District, WI**

### **Background**

Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD) has cited years of activism from the organization Freedom Inc. and the killing of George Floyd as reasons to separate from SROs.<sup>179</sup> In June 2019, MMSD approved a new 3-year contract with the Madison Police

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<sup>176</sup> West Contra Costa Unified School District . (2020, August 11). Documents for August 11, 2020. Retrieved March 15, 2022, from

<https://www.wccusd.net/site/default.aspx?PageType=3&DomainID=1362&ModuleInstanceID=20604&ViewID=6446EE88-D30C-497E-9316-3F8874B3E108&RenderLoc=0&FlexDataID=76152&PageID=5457>

<sup>177</sup> Smith, C. (2022, May 25). *Bay Area School districts reassure parents safety measures after Texas shooting*. Retrieved May 29, 2022, from <https://www.nbcbayarea.com/news/local/bay-area-school-districts-reassure-parents-safety-measures-after-texas-shooting/2901710/>

<sup>178</sup> West Contra Costa Unified School District . (2022). *Superintendent's Community message: April 29, 2022*. Retrieved June 8, 2022, from <https://www.wccusd.net/site/default.aspx?PageType=3&DomainID=1&ModuleInstanceID=26537&ViewID=6446EE88-D30C-497E-9316-3F8874B3E108&RenderLoc=0&FlexDataID=100750&PageID=1>

<sup>179</sup> Fox, M. (2020, July 6). *Madison School Board votes to end contract with Police Department*. Wisconsin Public Radio. Retrieved March 15, 2022, from <https://www.wpr.org/madison-school-board-votes-end-contract-police-department>

Department,<sup>180</sup> continuing 3 decades of police presence in MMSD schools.<sup>181</sup> A year later, the MMSD Board of Education voted to immediately end its contract.<sup>182</sup>

While students were in remote learning in the first semester of the 2020-21 school year, MMSD created a Safety and Security Ad Hoc Committee, which consisted of 29 community members and two board members.<sup>183</sup> The committee met virtually until December 2020, developing 16 recommendations that the Board of Education voted to accept the following February.<sup>184</sup> The committee made recommendations to invest in restorative justice practices, reduce class sizes, include additional staff positions, and have a review process for when law enforcement is called.<sup>185</sup> In response to the recommendations, the MMSD Board of Education approved increasing the pay for school security assistants and adding restorative justice positions in the 2021-2022 budget.<sup>186</sup>

Many Safety and Security Ad Hoc Committee members expressed concerns about how quickly they were required to make recommendations to the Board of Education. Some asked for more time to fully explore the complex concept of school safety, but the group

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<sup>180</sup> Tesfamichael, N. (2019, June 11). *In less than five minutes, Madison School Board approves new contract for police in schools*. madison.com. Retrieved May 30, 2022, from [https://madison.com/ct/news/local/education/in-less-than-five-minutes-madison-school-board-approves-new-contract-for-police-in-schools/article\\_79d55416-554d-5d67-a130-9639555e6a44.html](https://madison.com/ct/news/local/education/in-less-than-five-minutes-madison-school-board-approves-new-contract-for-police-in-schools/article_79d55416-554d-5d67-a130-9639555e6a44.html)

<sup>181</sup> Tesfamichael, N., & Brewer, B. (2019, June 26). *Policing Madison schools: Are the days numbered for school resource officers?* madison.com. Retrieved May 30, 2022, from [https://madison.com/ct/news/local/education/policing-madison-schools-are-the-days-numbered-for-school-resource-officers/article\\_29afa178-eb0b-587c-8838-015eaff0537b.html](https://madison.com/ct/news/local/education/policing-madison-schools-are-the-days-numbered-for-school-resource-officers/article_29afa178-eb0b-587c-8838-015eaff0537b.html)

<sup>182</sup> Girard, S. (2020, June 29). *Updated: Madison School Board votes unanimously to end police in schools contract*. madison.com. Retrieved May 30, 2022, from [https://madison.com/ct/news/local/education/local\\_schools/updated-madison-school-board-votes-unanimously-to-end-police-in-schools-contract/article\\_ac077373-a518-554f-a7a6-1f2514d989a6.html](https://madison.com/ct/news/local/education/local_schools/updated-madison-school-board-votes-unanimously-to-end-police-in-schools-contract/article_ac077373-a518-554f-a7a6-1f2514d989a6.html)

<sup>183</sup> Girard, S. (2021, July 1). *One year after Madison School Board ended police contract, MMSD focuses on 'proactive' safety practices*. The Cap Times. Retrieved May 30, 2022, from [https://captimes.com/news/local/education/local\\_schools/one-year-after-madison-school-board-ended-police-contract-mmsd-focuses-on-proactive-safety-practices/article\\_f5998930-e6a0-599c-b585-6749860a8ee7.html](https://captimes.com/news/local/education/local_schools/one-year-after-madison-school-board-ended-police-contract-mmsd-focuses-on-proactive-safety-practices/article_f5998930-e6a0-599c-b585-6749860a8ee7.html)

<sup>184</sup> Girard, S. (2021, February 16). *Safety and security work moves to Superintendent's Advisory Committee*. madison.com. Retrieved May 30, 2022, from [https://madison.com/ct/news/local/education/local\\_schools/safety-and-security-work-moves-to-superintendents-advisory-committee/article\\_21dd4f27-6edf-55f8-a101-10bac4650ed6.html](https://madison.com/ct/news/local/education/local_schools/safety-and-security-work-moves-to-superintendents-advisory-committee/article_21dd4f27-6edf-55f8-a101-10bac4650ed6.html)

<sup>185</sup> Girard, S. (2021, February 16). *Safety and security work moves to Superintendent's Advisory Committee*. madison.com. Retrieved May 30, 2022, from [https://madison.com/ct/news/local/education/local\\_schools/safety-and-security-work-moves-to-superintendents-advisory-committee/article\\_21dd4f27-6edf-55f8-a101-10bac4650ed6.html](https://madison.com/ct/news/local/education/local_schools/safety-and-security-work-moves-to-superintendents-advisory-committee/article_21dd4f27-6edf-55f8-a101-10bac4650ed6.html)

<sup>186</sup> Girard, S. (2021, July 1). *One year after Madison School Board ended police contract, MMSD focuses on 'proactive' safety practices*. The Cap Times. Retrieved May 30, 2022, from [https://captimes.com/news/local/education/local\\_schools/one-year-after-madison-school-board-ended-police-contract-mmsd-focuses-on-proactive-safety-practices/article\\_f5998930-e6a0-599c-b585-6749860a8ee7.html](https://captimes.com/news/local/education/local_schools/one-year-after-madison-school-board-ended-police-contract-mmsd-focuses-on-proactive-safety-practices/article_f5998930-e6a0-599c-b585-6749860a8ee7.html)

had to act quickly to include recommendations in the 2021-2022 budget.<sup>187</sup> Due to the quick decision of MMSD to end its use of SROs, the district recently established a new ad hoc committee to further discuss safety and student wellness. The group aims to “collaborate with youth, families, school partners, district staff, and community leaders to address the root causes of student disengagement and behavior.”<sup>188</sup> The committee held four meetings in April and May 2022, and future meetings are scheduled. The group has discussed visions for student safety, issues MMSD can address differently or expand on, and communication strategies that allow student and family contributions.

While MMSD develops a new safety plan, students have been on campuses for one and a half years without SROs. MMSD has relied on its School Security Assistants (SSAs) for safety, and a restorative justice coach to begin implementing restorative justice practices in schools. By moving quickly, MMSD has faced many challenges that they are now working to address.

## **Safety Personnel**

### *Prior and current staffing*

MMSD’s high schools had both SSAs and an SRO before the contract with the Madison Police Department was discontinued. Middle schools, on the other hand, relied only on SSAs, while elementary schools had neither. According to one SSA, there was little difference between the roles of SROs and SSAs. Both roles included building relationships with students, de-escalating conflicts, and coordinating with paramedics and police in dangerous situations.<sup>189</sup>

An administrator we spoke with stated they had one SRO stationed at their high school. The SRO was embedded in teams, had relationships with families, made efforts to prevent students from being involved in the criminal justice system, and allowed the school to work more seamlessly with the Madison Police Department.<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> Girard, S. (2020, December 6). *As Madison Schools' safety and Security Committee considers recommendations, some want more time*. madison.com. Retrieved May 30, 2022, from [https://madison.com/ct/news/local/education/local\\_schools/as-madison-schools-safety-and-security-committee-considers-recommendations-some-want-more-time/article\\_963b99c5-9589-5e80-8e02-695c6c402bef.html](https://madison.com/ct/news/local/education/local_schools/as-madison-schools-safety-and-security-committee-considers-recommendations-some-want-more-time/article_963b99c5-9589-5e80-8e02-695c6c402bef.html)

<sup>188</sup> Madison Metropolitan School District. (2022). *Safety and Student Wellness Ad Hoc Committee*. Retrieved May 30, 2022, from <https://www.madison.k12.wi.us/about/board-of-education/safety-and-student-wellness-ad-hoc-committee>

<sup>189</sup> Farrell, B., Hauge, R., & Stocker, M. (2020, November 24). *Police-free schools: Security staff step up as MMSD strategizes safety*. madison.com. Retrieved May 30, 2022, from [https://madison.com/ct/news/local/police-free-schools-security-staff-step-up-as-mmsd-strategizes-safety/article\\_46ca1e35-209e-527c-b65a-bc526d89d03d.html](https://madison.com/ct/news/local/police-free-schools-security-staff-step-up-as-mmsd-strategizes-safety/article_46ca1e35-209e-527c-b65a-bc526d89d03d.html)

<sup>190</sup> MMSD High School Principal, personal communication, May 23, 2022.



Since ending the use of SROs, the MMSD has designed a safety strategy around the expanded use of SSAs and Restorative Justice Coordinators. Between June 2020 and October 2021, 13 SSAs were hired (for a total of 30) and assigned to each high school and five middle schools in the district.<sup>191</sup> Additionally, some schools have made their own changes to address the absence of SROs.

For example, one high school converted the principal's secretary position into a Coordinator of Student Engagement. The school now has five SSAs and has a Behavioral Assistance Team composed of two deans and two Coordinators of Student Engagement. Deans serve as mentors, advocates, intermediators, and trusted adults for students. They can also discipline students. Coordinators of Student Engagement, also known as Student Advocates, have similar roles to deans, but are unable to discipline. Additionally, the school uses the Restorative Justice Coach after student behavioral incidents. While the school administrator stated they did not want to sacrifice their own staff for this work, she understood that students needed extra support to fill the gaps created by the COVID-19 pandemic and the removal of their SRO.<sup>192</sup>

### *Roles and responsibilities*

Supervised by each school's principal, SSAs provide direct support for students and staff. They are responsible for patrolling school grounds, building relationships with students, de-escalating conflicts, and coordinating with police or paramedics in dangerous situations. SSAs are extensively trained in student engagement, conflict resolution, and crisis management. In 2020, the Board of Education approved a 10% wage increase, added five additional contract days for professional learning, and appointed an SSA Lead to each high school.<sup>193</sup>

Through the Bureau of Justice Assistance STOP School Violence and Mental Health Training grant and the Wisconsin Department of Justice Office of School Safety grant, all MMSD schools have School-Based Critical Response Teams whose goals are to prevent violence and provide early intervention. Each team is led by the school principal or assistant principal and is composed of "school psychologist(s), social worker(s), counselor(s), nurse, dean/PBIS coach, Multicultural Coordinator/Restorative Justice Coordinator, School Security Assistants, Behavior Education Assistants, Mental Health

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<sup>191</sup> Madison Metropolitan School District.(2020). District Safety Plan 2020-2021. Madison, WI. Retrieved March 15, 2022, from [https://drive.google.com/file/d/17E5sCQZ70X7LNg\\_2paCTqq\\_wuz7Kr-K-/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/17E5sCQZ70X7LNg_2paCTqq_wuz7Kr-K-/view)

<sup>192</sup> MMSD High School Principal, personal communication, May 23, 2022.

<sup>193</sup> Madison Metropolitan School District.(2020). District Safety Plan 2020-2021. Madison, WI. Retrieved March 15, 2022, from [https://drive.google.com/file/d/17E5sCQZ70X7LNg\\_2paCTqq\\_wuz7Kr-K-/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/17E5sCQZ70X7LNg_2paCTqq_wuz7Kr-K-/view)

Officer (per grant), GRIT worker, and/or others as appropriate.”<sup>194</sup> Teams are trained in threat assessment, mental health crisis management, and early intervention to acts of violence/harm in schools. Team leads are expected to consult with local law enforcement, cross systems agencies, and family and student support systems as needed to prevent students from being in contact with the criminal justice system. Additionally, teams should initiate restorative justice practices and re-engagement strategies within the school and use the District Critical Response and Safety and Security teams for guidance and support.

MMSD’s District Safety and Security Team is responsible for safety planning, staff training, implementing the MMSD safety plan, and collaborating with law enforcement. Meanwhile, the District Critical Response Team (DCRT) is used to respond to critical incidents. The DCRT is a cross-functional team made up of the Chief of Staff; Chief of Schools; Director of Student Services Operations and Accountability; Director of Physical, Mental, and Behavioral Health; Director of Safety and Security; Director of Media and Government Relations; Coordinator of Intensive Support and Critical Response; Public Information Officer; and the Coordinator of Cross Systems and Critical Response.<sup>195</sup>

### *Criteria for hire*

According to MMSD’s job posting, SSAs must have experience working cross-culturally or show commitment to improving their cultural competence. SSAs must have training and experience in crisis management and emergency medical procedures, experience working with middle and high school youth, have a CPR/AED certification, and the ability to intervene in physical and verbal altercations between students, staff, or the public, calmly and effectively. MMSD states that prior security experience and knowledge of the juvenile justice system is preferred.<sup>196</sup>

### *Training*

SSAs receive training on student engagement, crisis management, and conflict resolution. Additionally, SSAs receive extensive training in response to emergency

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<sup>194</sup> Madison Metropolitan School District. (2020). District Safety Plan 2020-2021. Madison, WI. Retrieved March 15, 2022, from [https://drive.google.com/file/d/17E5sCQZ70X7LNg\\_2paCTqg\\_wuz7Kr-K/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/17E5sCQZ70X7LNg_2paCTqg_wuz7Kr-K/view)

<sup>195</sup> Madison Metropolitan School District. (2020). District Safety Plan 2020-2021. Madison, WI. Retrieved March 15, 2022, from [https://drive.google.com/file/d/17E5sCQZ70X7LNg\\_2paCTqg\\_wuz7Kr-K/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/17E5sCQZ70X7LNg_2paCTqg_wuz7Kr-K/view)

<sup>196</sup> Madison Metropolitan School District . (n.d.). 21-22 - *security assistant pool*. MMSD Talent Portal. Retrieved May 30, 2022, from <https://mmsd.csod.com/ux/ats/careersite/1/home/requisition/403?c=mmsd>

situations, first aid/CPR, and on legal matters related to enforcing the student code of conduct.<sup>197</sup>

Based on Wisconsin Act 118, CC teachers, administration, SEAs, behavior EAs, S/L, OT/PTVI, DHH teachers and staff, social workers, psychologists, counselors, and other crisis/behavioral response team members are required to be trained in nonviolent crisis intervention through Crisis Prevention Institute. The training provides staff with the knowledge to de-escalate and respond to unsafe behaviors. MMSD states that its goal is to have mandated staff retrained every 2 years and offer the proactive aspects of the training to non-mandated staff.<sup>198</sup>

### *After school hours*

There was public concern about after-school event safety when MMSD returned to in-person events. Due to community concern, police were brought back to basketball events and were present at the end of the football season.<sup>199</sup> According to MMSD's 2020-2021 District Safety Plan, supervision of after-school activities is "a function of the adults accountable to the student athletes participating in the sport, the school administrations, and the safety and security personnel assigned to an after-school duty." Competitions with large crowds are staffed with local police officers to assist school supervisors.<sup>200</sup>

## **Discipline Procedures/Crisis Response**

### *Formal agreement with law enforcement*

It appears that MMSD has no new formal agreement with the Madison Police Department. However, there is still a strong relationship between the district and Madison Police Department.

### *Mandatory reporting*

While MMSD has been identified as developing alternative safety strategies that do not rely on any form of police in schools, they are required under mandatory reporting laws

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<sup>197</sup>Madison Metropolitan School District . (n.d.). *21-22 - security assistant pool*. MMSD Talent Portal. Retrieved May 30, 2022, from

<https://mmsd.csod.com/ux/ats/careersite/1/home/requisition/403?c=mmsd>

<sup>198</sup> Madison Metropolitan School District.(2020). District Safety Plan 2020-2021. Madison, WI.

Retrieved March 15, 2022, from [https://drive.google.com/file/d/17E5sCQZ70X7LNg\\_2paCTqq\\_wuz7Kr-K-/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/17E5sCQZ70X7LNg_2paCTqq_wuz7Kr-K-/view)

<sup>199</sup> MMSD High School Principal, personal communication, May 23, 2022.

<sup>200</sup> Madison Metropolitan School District. (2020). District Safety Plan 2020-2021. Madison, WI.

Retrieved March 15, 2022, from [https://drive.google.com/file/d/17E5sCQZ70X7LNg\\_2paCTqq\\_wuz7Kr-K-/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/17E5sCQZ70X7LNg_2paCTqq_wuz7Kr-K-/view)

to notify law enforcement of “any threat—whether spoken, written or symbolic” if it is believed there “is a serious and imminent threat to the health or safety of others.”<sup>201</sup>

Wisconsin law also requires all employees to report suspected child abuse and neglect. Staff can first consult with administrators or support staff but are not permitted to delay a report. If a staff member makes a report, they must also inform the school-based social worker, who will then work with Dane County Child Protection Social Workers. Both Dane County Initial Assessment Social Workers and law enforcement are allowed to speak with students suspected of experiencing abuse or neglect without parent permission.

Importantly, all school teams have in place detailed response protocols for a variety of incidents to ensure consistency across the district, including guidance on how schools should respond or report an incident. Having a common reference for both schools and the district’s central office allows for a consistent and thorough approach. Since school sites no longer have SROs, administrators are now working with the central safety office during events that need law enforcement involvement. Instead of having an SRO directly communicate with local police, administrators now call the central office who reaches out to law enforcement.<sup>202</sup>

The goal of MMSD’s new safety plan is to work with students prior to events that require law enforcement engagement, and to implement risk assessment programs that can identify students that need extra support and intervention.<sup>203</sup>

### *Crisis response*

In 2018, the Wisconsin Legislature enacted the 2017 Wisconsin Act 143 (“Act 143”). The act focused on analyzing and improving Wisconsin schools’ response to threats. Act 143 pushed MMSD’s Safety and Security Team to work closely with school communities to strengthen safety protocols. According to MMSD, “the district Safety and Security Team has diligently worked with the Madison Police Department, Dane County Emergency Management, Wisconsin Safety and Security Coordinators Association, Dane County School Districts, MMSD administrators, Madison Teachers Incorporated, Department of Justice and other districts across the state to build a school safety plan

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<sup>201</sup> Madison Metropolitan School District. (2020). *Act 143: School Safety Assessments, safety plans, drills and reporting*. Retrieved March 20, 2022, from <https://www.madison.k12.wi.us/office-of-school-safety/act-143-school-safety-assessments-safety-plans-drills-and-reporting>

<sup>202</sup> MMSD High School Principal, personal communication, May 23, 2022.

<sup>203</sup> Girard, S. (2021, July 1). *One year after Madison School Board ended police contract, MMSD focuses on 'proactive' safety practices*. The Cap Times. Retrieved May 30, 2022, from [https://captimes.com/news/local/education/local\\_schools/one-year-after-madison-school-board-ended-police-contract-mmsd-focuses-on-proactive-safety-practices/article\\_f5998930-e6a0-599c-b585-6749860a8ee7.html](https://captimes.com/news/local/education/local_schools/one-year-after-madison-school-board-ended-police-contract-mmsd-focuses-on-proactive-safety-practices/article_f5998930-e6a0-599c-b585-6749860a8ee7.html)

template to capture the requirements of Act 143.”<sup>204</sup> The district describes its safety plan as a living document that will evolve as school safety teams continue to create safe and welcoming learning environments. School specific and district safety plans will be assessed, evaluated, and brought before the Board of Education annually for approval.

Act 143 and MMSD’s Board Policy 4147 requires an individualized safety plan for each school building and facility with regular student occupation. The safety plan must contain:<sup>205</sup>

- An identified school safety team
- General guidelines specifying procedures for emergency prevention and mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery
- Process of reviewing drills required by the plan
- Annual training of active threat events (a written evaluation of such training must be submitted to the Board of Education)
- Identification of staff members required to receive annual training
- Copy of each building’s blueprint submitted to local law enforcement and the DOJ

Additionally, the US departments of Education and Homeland Security “recommends school emergency plans be clear, concise, and comprehensive, informed by the unique needs of the school district and its buildings.”<sup>206</sup>

When crises or critical events occur, such as community violence, assault, death, or disasters, MMSD relies on school Restorative Critical Response (RCR) Teams to provide safety and support to students and staff. RCR Teams provide an immediate response, as well as additional or follow-up support for those identified as being most affected by such an event.<sup>207</sup>

MMSD has allocated money from the Student, Teachers, and Officers Preventing (STOP) School Violence Act of 2018 to deepen the implementation of school-based RCR Teams within the six high schools. According to Madison’s 2020-2021 District Safety Plan, MMSD received \$250,000 to fully fund the cost of an RCR grant

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<sup>204</sup> Madison Metropolitan School District.(2020). District Safety Plan 2020-2021. Madison, WI. Retrieved March 15, 2022, from [https://drive.google.com/file/d/17E5sCQZ70X7LNg\\_2paCTqq\\_wuz7Kr-K-/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/17E5sCQZ70X7LNg_2paCTqq_wuz7Kr-K-/view)

<sup>205</sup> Madison Metropolitan School District.(2020). District Safety Plan 2020-2021. Madison, WI. Retrieved March 15, 2022, from [https://drive.google.com/file/d/17E5sCQZ70X7LNg\\_2paCTqq\\_wuz7Kr-K-/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/17E5sCQZ70X7LNg_2paCTqq_wuz7Kr-K-/view)

<sup>206</sup> Madison Metropolitan School District.(2020). District Safety Plan 2020-2021. Madison, WI. Retrieved March 15, 2022, from [https://drive.google.com/file/d/17E5sCQZ70X7LNg\\_2paCTqq\\_wuz7Kr-K-/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/17E5sCQZ70X7LNg_2paCTqq_wuz7Kr-K-/view)

<sup>207</sup> Madison Metropolitan School District.(2020). District Safety Plan 2020-2021. Madison, WI. Retrieved March 15, 2022, from [https://drive.google.com/file/d/17E5sCQZ70X7LNg\\_2paCTqq\\_wuz7Kr-K-/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/17E5sCQZ70X7LNg_2paCTqq_wuz7Kr-K-/view)

coordinator, school-based student services RCR lead and point of contact, RCR school-based training, and a required US BJA conference.<sup>208</sup>

Additionally, the district relies on a Mobile Behavior Response Team to respond to critical incidents. In cases of highly dysregulated students, or fights that cannot be contained by school staff, law enforcement is called.<sup>209</sup>

After incidents, MMSD uses a Student Services Team to support students and families in the recovery process. Student Services Teams can provide services directly to students and families or connect individuals to community resources. Administrators are expected to work with Student Services Teams to create a plan of support for a victim/survivor of an incident. In some cases, MMSD states that Student Services Teams will facilitate school-wide dialogues to help foster healing and culture shifts. The district's Restorative Critical Response Team and school administrator will work with the school's student service teams in this process. Further, MMSD has an academic recovery plan that includes both short and long-term strategies to help with social-emotional recovery.

MMSD states that areas for growth in their response to crisis events include the "development of formal school safety teams, incident command, and communication methods during the event of a real emergency."<sup>210</sup>

### *Facilities*

In November 2020, the Madison community voted to approve the 2020 referendum, Future Ready, which includes \$317 million towards building projects, and \$33 million for enriching programming and retaining high-quality staff. However, it appears that the updates to facilities were not a district result of MMSD's new safety plan.<sup>211</sup>

### **Staff Support & Wraparound Services**

Since ending the use of SROs, MMSD filled 35 new counselor, social worker, and psychologist positions, and is working to hire a mental health navigator. The district

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<sup>208</sup> Madison Metropolitan School District.(2020). District Safety Plan 2020-2021. Madison, WI. Retrieved March 15, 2022, from [https://drive.google.com/file/d/17E5sCQZ70X7LNg\\_2paCTqg\\_wuz7Kr-K-/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/17E5sCQZ70X7LNg_2paCTqg_wuz7Kr-K-/view)

<sup>209</sup> MMSD High School Principal, personal communication, May 23, 2022.

<sup>210</sup> Madison Metropolitan School District.(2020). District Safety Plan 2020-2021. Madison, WI. Retrieved March 15, 2022, from [https://drive.google.com/file/d/17E5sCQZ70X7LNg\\_2paCTqg\\_wuz7Kr-K-/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/17E5sCQZ70X7LNg_2paCTqg_wuz7Kr-K-/view)

<sup>211</sup> Madison Metropolitan School District. (n.d.). *2020 referenda - future ready*. Retrieved May 30, 2022, from <https://www.madison.k12.wi.us/about/referendum>

currently has three student safety and mental health-focused administrators and two mental health coaches.<sup>212</sup>

Additionally, the MMSD Board of Education has stated it will use part of the \$33 million program budget increase from the 2020 Future Ready referendum to increase mental health and restorative justice services. Meanwhile, MMSD's Behavioral Health in Schools program plans to bring behavioral clinicians to 11 high schools and five elementary schools.<sup>213</sup>

However, according to one high school administrator, their school, which includes 2,200 students, has not received any additional mental health or social worker positions. Rather, their school has lost a dean, a psychologist, and a social worker in addition to their SRO since the start of COVID-19. They have received a restorative justice coach with great knowledge of restorative justice practices, but according to the administrator, this staff member has no experience or training in working with high school students. The administrator is starting to see positive outcomes from the use of restorative justice in their school but believes this position does not make up for the ones that have been lost.<sup>214</sup>

### **School Climate/Culture**

MMSD spent an estimated \$380,000 per year on school police officers, and has since reinvested this money in SSAs, transformative justice training, and support programs for students. MMSD also reallocated some of the federal COVID relief money it received to "improve training in conflict resolution and restorative justice with volunteers and school-based staff" and increased substitute teacher pay.<sup>215</sup>

However, according to one high school administrator, staff have not received any new training. The administrator believes principals and staff across the district have a strong desire for more training, but they have not received any yet.<sup>216</sup> Specifically, they would like to see more de-escalation training, as well as training to respond to physical

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<sup>212</sup> Beyer, E. (2021, December 6). *Fights prompt questions regarding Madison School District decision to remove SROs*. Retrieved March 15, 2022, from [https://madison.com/news/local/education/local\\_schools/fights-prompt-questions-regarding-madison-school-district-decision-to-remove-sros/article\\_7dbbfe8d-6de8-5422-891c-bc399c8be046.html](https://madison.com/news/local/education/local_schools/fights-prompt-questions-regarding-madison-school-district-decision-to-remove-sros/article_7dbbfe8d-6de8-5422-891c-bc399c8be046.html)

<sup>213</sup> Farrell, B., Hauge, R., & Stocker, M. (2020, November 24). *Police-free schools: Security staff step up as MMSD strategizes safety*. madison.com. Retrieved May 30, 2022, from [https://madison.com/ct/news/local/police-free-schools-security-staff-step-up-as-mmsd-strategizes-safety/article\\_46ca1e35-209e-527c-b65a-bc526d89d03d.html](https://madison.com/ct/news/local/police-free-schools-security-staff-step-up-as-mmsd-strategizes-safety/article_46ca1e35-209e-527c-b65a-bc526d89d03d.html)

<sup>214</sup> MMSD High School Principal, personal communication, May 23, 2022.

<sup>215</sup> Beyer, E. (2021, December 6). *Fights prompt questions regarding Madison School District decision to remove SROs*. Retrieved March 15, 2022, from [https://madison.com/news/local/education/local\\_schools/fights-prompt-questions-regarding-madison-school-district-decision-to-remove-sros/article\\_7dbbfe8d-6de8-5422-891c-bc399c8be046.html](https://madison.com/news/local/education/local_schools/fights-prompt-questions-regarding-madison-school-district-decision-to-remove-sros/article_7dbbfe8d-6de8-5422-891c-bc399c8be046.html)

<sup>216</sup> MMSD High School Principal, personal communication, May 23, 2022.

altercations when necessary. Additionally, the administrator has found that both students and staff have struggled with mental health issues since the COVID-19 pandemic began and urges the district to increase wraparound services to address the social and emotional impacts of returning to in-person learning.

According to the 2020-2021 District Safety Plan, MMSD is making efforts to improve school climate and safety with the development of programs such as PBIS, Welcoming Schools, and restorative practices. Additionally, an MMSD Trauma Sensitive Schools Implementation Guide has been developed, and all new staff will receive trauma-sensitive professional development.<sup>217</sup> It is unclear at this time where MMSD is at in implementing the goals listed in its District Safety Plan.

### **Challenges/Lessons/Outcomes**

According to one high school administrator, MMSD's process of reimagining school safety has been extremely challenging for many schools. The administrator reported she is starting to see success with restorative justice practices in her school a year after first being implemented. However, she warns that MMSD has a long way to go before having a successful new safety plan. For instance, from a principal's standpoint, instead of being able to walk down the hall to receive help from an SRO during a crisis, she now must call the central office, which then calls the police. This has resulted in a different officer responding every time there is an incident and feeling frustrated that there is no direct line of communication available to her school. Specifically, the administrator has a school of 2,200 students, and has found that no longer having the direct communication with law enforcement that had previously allowed her to be informed of events happening in the surrounding community has been a huge drawback of the new safety model.

The administrator advises other districts considering the separation from law enforcement to work on creating a relationship with local police agencies to a point where there is one person in the department who responds to school calls. She believes that individual schools must communicate with the central office, but administrators should also have a direct relationship with an officer who can reliably respond to school calls. Not only does the principal say that this will allow officers to respond more effectively to crises within schools, but it will also re-establish the ability for administrators to be debriefed on important events happening in the surrounding communities.

Importantly, the administrator stated that MMSD's decision to end the use of SROs was done without the input of many administrators and against the recommendation of

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<sup>217</sup> Madison Metropolitan School District. (2020). District Safety Plan 2020-2021. Madison, WI. Retrieved March 15, 2022, from [https://drive.google.com/file/d/17E5sCQZ70X7LNg\\_2paCTqq\\_wuz7Kr-K-/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/17E5sCQZ70X7LNg_2paCTqq_wuz7Kr-K-/view)



many. According to the administrator, the decision was a result of a strong community push, rather than the opinions of her students and staff. Because administrators were not engaged or involved in the decision, the administrator believes that MMSD's implementation of the new safety plan has led to principals being asked to lead without the tools to successfully do so.

Others have echoed feelings of frustration with the outcomes of MMSD's safety model. For example, a member of Freedom Inc., a non-profit organization working for years toward police-free schools, noted that many decisions were made behind closed doors through a superintendent's working group. The member stated that although there were some great recommendations made by the group, they were not thrilled with the outcome because the plans did not seem complete and there were no structures in place to hold the district accountable for implementation.<sup>218</sup>

In addition to facing criticism for how the new safety plan was developed, MMSD has also faced challenges in responding to fears of physical violence. Due to increased reports of fighting since returning to in-person learning, MMSD's new safety plan has led to political pushback from certain groups. For instance, in the fall semester of 2021, when students first returned to in-person learning, fights and school walkouts made headlines in Madison.<sup>219</sup> MMSD's East High School, for example, saw numerous fights during the fall semester of 2021. In one instance, police responded to multiple simultaneous fights on East's campus, and used pepper spray to disperse students. Five students needed hospital attention for pepper spray-related injuries.<sup>220</sup>

After the event at East High School, many parents reached out to local news and spoke at a school board meeting to express their concerns about student safety. Some parents argued for the return of SROs. However, MMSD's Superintendent Dr. Jenkins stated he was against bringing officers back into schools, and instead said MMSD will continue to work with teachers, students, and community members to find other solutions.<sup>221</sup> Jenkins also stated there would be changes to MMSD's safety plan for

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<sup>218</sup> Girard, S. (2021, July 1). *One year after Madison School Board ended police contract, MMSD focuses on 'proactive' safety practices*. madison.com. Retrieved June 1, 2022, from [https://madison.com/ct/news/local/education/local\\_schools/one-year-after-madison-school-board-ended-police-contract-mmsd-focuses-on-proactive-safety-practices/article\\_08364d84-e043-57f5-9c6e-200c2a6c2598.html](https://madison.com/ct/news/local/education/local_schools/one-year-after-madison-school-board-ended-police-contract-mmsd-focuses-on-proactive-safety-practices/article_08364d84-e043-57f5-9c6e-200c2a6c2598.html)

<sup>219</sup> Wadas, E. (2022, February 21). *Madison police chief wants to implement redesigned SRO program into MMSD schools*. nbc15. Retrieved June 1, 2022, from <https://www.nbc15.com/2022/02/22/madison-police-chief-wants-implement-redesigned-sro-program-into-mmsd-schools/>

<sup>220</sup> Hamilton, B. (2021, November 16). *'The School Needs Help': MMSD plans district-wide analysis to study uptick in violence following fights at East High School*. Channel3000. Retrieved June 1, 2022, from <https://www.channel3000.com/the-school-needs-help-mmsd-school-board-discusses-violent-incident-at-madison-east-high-school/>

<sup>221</sup> Hamilton, B. (2021, November 16). *'The School Needs Help': MMSD plans district-wide analysis to study uptick in violence following fights at East High School*. Channel3000. Retrieved June 1, 2022,

East High School. These changes included adjusting the work schedules for behavior response staff, modifying lunch supervision, and having restorative justice personnel assist with student re-entry.<sup>222</sup>

Notably, many students continued to strongly advocate against the return of SROs on campus. Additionally, some parents at East High School came together after a series of student fights to create Moms on a Mission, a group that volunteers during the day, passing out snacks and supervising students during lunch and between classes.<sup>223</sup>

Since the discussions and safety plan changes made in the fall of 2021, MMSD has continued to see concerns regarding perceptions of safety. With increased news coverage of student incidents, many parents have begun to equate the removal of SROs with increased acts of violence. Recently, the Madison police chief has made public statements suggesting that MMSD should reinstate SROs. However, it is important to note that MMSD has not required more police assistance since ending its contract with SROs. An examination of open records requests found that from September to December 2019, when SROs were in schools, there were 393 calls for service made to MMSD's four high schools. From September to December 2021, when MMSD no longer had SROs, there were only 310 calls for service, a decrease of 21 percent. Additionally, emergency calls to law enforcement for incidents such as fights, battery, and weapons offenses decreased from 98 calls in the 2019 fall semester to 94 calls in the 2021 fall semester.<sup>224</sup>

Because of the tensions between stakeholders, the public, and students in the wake of increased physical altercations between students, MMSD has committed to continue providing important information to its community regarding the challenges and barriers of using alternative safety strategies.

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from <https://www.channel3000.com/the-school-needs-help-mmsd-school-board-discusses-violent-incident-at-madison-east-high-school/>

<sup>222</sup> Vinogradov, M. (2021, November 10). *MMSD modifies East High School Safety plans following student fights and citations*. Channel3000. Retrieved June 1, 2022, from <https://www.channel3000.com/mmsd-modifies-east-high-school-safety-plans-following-student-fights-and-citations/>

<sup>223</sup> Beyer, E. (2021, December 6). *Fights prompt questions regarding Madison School District decision to remove SROs*. Retrieved March 15, 2022, from [https://madison.com/news/local/education/local\\_schools/fights-prompt-questions-regarding-madison-school-district-decision-to-remove-sros/article\\_7dbbfe8d-6de8-5422-891c-bc399c8be046.html](https://madison.com/news/local/education/local_schools/fights-prompt-questions-regarding-madison-school-district-decision-to-remove-sros/article_7dbbfe8d-6de8-5422-891c-bc399c8be046.html)

<sup>224</sup> Wadas, E. (2022, February 21). *Madison police chief wants to implement redesigned SRO program into MMSD schools*. nbc15. Retrieved June 1, 2022, from <https://www.nbc15.com/2022/02/22/madison-police-chief-wants-implement-redesigned-sro-program-into-mmsd-schools/>

## **Oakland Unified School District, CA**

### **Background**

The Black Organizing Project (BOP) in Oakland, California, began campaigns to remove police from schools in 2011 after the killing of Raheim Brown by a member of the Oakland Schools Police Department (OSPD). BOP conducted research and analysis of the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) data to find alarming rates of arrests by school police, especially for Black students. In response, BOP proposed the Bettering Our School System (“BOSS”) campaign to address concerns regarding law enforcement engagement with students.<sup>225</sup> In 2019, BOP launched the Plan for Police Free Schools and helped pass the George Floyd Resolution on June 24, 2021, disbanding their police unit.<sup>226</sup>

According to the George Floyd District Safety Plan, OUSD developed specific planning phases in regard to removing OSPD from their schools. The Phase 1 Plan addressed the minimum required changes to provide safe schools in the absence of OSPD. This phase included the following steps:<sup>227</sup>

1. Analyze OSPD data in order to frame planning sessions co-led by OUSD and BOP
2. Convene individuals from OUSD and the community to lend insight from a variety of vantage points
3. Break into working groups to establish and build upon existing non-police responses to:
  - a. Mental health crises (WIC 5150)
  - b. Child abuse and Child Protective Service cases
  - c. Common situations requiring skilled de-escalation
  - d. Revise as needed OUSD policies (Board Policies and Administrative Regulations) that make reference to police
  - e. Develop school-level guides and manuals that help provide school personnel direction in responding to situations that might have involved OSPD alongside other responses in the past
4. Finalize a concrete plan to ensure the safety of students and adults on OUSD school campuses without OSPD

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<sup>225</sup> “Black Organizing Project,” [www.blackorganizingproject.org](http://www.blackorganizingproject.org)

<sup>226</sup> *George Floyd Resolution*. Black Organizing Project. (2021, November 2). Retrieved March 15, 2022, from <https://blackorganizingproject.org/george-floyd-resolution/>

<sup>227</sup> Oakland Unified School District. (2020, December). *George Floyd district safety plan phase 1 (adoption)*. P.4. Retrieved June 11, 2022, from <https://oaklandside.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/20-2147-Board-Memorandum-Resolution-Plan-George-Floyd-District-Safety-Plan-Phase-1-Second-Reading-1292020.pdf>

## 5. Remove OSPD

In December 2020, the Phase 1 Plan was shared with the board. Included was a detailed “Law Enforcement Protocols” document, a revised Discipline Matrix, and budget details. Additionally, the Phase 1 Plan included an outline for Phase 2 planning which was anticipated to begin in January 2021. It was stated that Phase 2 planning would include, at a minimum, “a plan to conduct ongoing anti-racism training, school culture & climate transformation, and a progress monitoring and evaluation strategy,” as well as detailed budget information and a timeline.<sup>228</sup> Phase 2 Planning goals address longer-term transformative practices to create a positive school climate and culture and ensure safety in the absence of OSPD and is ongoing.

### **Safety Personnel**

#### *Prior and current staffing*

Before the resolution, the OUSD relied on its own police force to provide safety since 1957. The school district believed it would be helpful to have their own officers who wanted to work in schools and could know the students.<sup>229</sup> OUSD employed 20 sworn armed police officers that worked centrally and responded to schools’ 911 calls instead of the city police.<sup>230</sup>

In addition to the police unit, the district employed 120 School Security Officers (SSOs). Section 38000 of the California Education Code outlined the OUSD police officers’ duties to enforce infractions of the law and permitted officers to carry guns on school grounds. The SSOs, on the other hand, were not sworn officers and did not have arrest or citation power but carried handcuffs and had similar responsibilities to the police.<sup>231</sup> SSOs primarily worked in middle and high schools.

With the passage of the George Floyd Resolution to Eliminate the Oakland Schools Police Department in June 2020, the school district disbanded its police unit and changed the name and job description of SSOs to Culture Keepers. In addition to the name change, SSOs were re-trained for a new role that emphasizes relationships with students, trauma-informed de-escalation techniques, and restorative justice practices.

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<sup>228</sup>Oakland Unified School District. (2020, December). *George Floyd district safety plan phase 1 (adoption)*. Retrieved June 11, 2022, from <https://oaklandside.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/20-2147-Board-Memorandum-Resolution-Plan-George-Floyd-District-Safety-Plan-Phase-1-Second-Reading-1292020.pdf>

<sup>229</sup> OUSD District Official, personal communication, May 23, 2022.

<sup>230</sup> “Black Organizing Project,” [www.blackorganizingproject.org](http://www.blackorganizingproject.org)

<sup>231</sup> Black Organizing Project, Public Counsel, and the ACLU of Northern California. (2013, August). *From Report Card to Criminal Record: The Impact of Policing Oakland Youth*. Retrieved March 15, 2022, from <https://blackorganizingproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/FromReportCardtoCriminalRecordImpactofPolicingOaklandYouthFinalVer.pdf>

Due to budget cuts over the last few years, OUSD currently employs roughly 70 Culture Keepers, many of whom have transitioned from previous SSO duties.<sup>232</sup>

### *Roles and responsibilities*

Culture Keepers work on school sites. Daily, they move around the campus, encourage kids to get to class, and respond to calls regarding crises and fights. Culture Keepers are trained in Safety Care, a behavioral intervention approach that has a heavy emphasis on de-escalation techniques and least restrictive responses, with physical restraints as a last resort.<sup>233</sup>

Culture Keepers look different from the previous SSOs. SSOs were unarmed but wore uniforms that looked like law enforcement professionals. To help shift the perception of these personnel from law enforcement to mentors, Culture Keepers now wear polo shirts that state “Culture Keeper.”

Further, OUSD removed the SSO II (or lead) position from the district and replaced it with a new position called the Culture and Climate Ambassador. Ambassadors work centrally to respond to events that need additional support. Currently, OUSD has seven Ambassadors. While Ambassadors can respond to any school call, two focus primarily on elementary schools, and the remaining five spend time supporting middle and high schools. Ambassadors are unarmed. At this point, OUSD states no one is playing a law enforcement role, but instead staff uses relational approaches.<sup>234</sup>

In short, OUSD is making significant changes to its new culture and climate-focused unit. OUSD outlined their new school-based and central-based approaches as differing from their previous approaches by centering relationship building and emphasizing conflict prevention through relationships with students, families, and the Oakland community. Additionally, OUSD’s new safety model differs by having safety personnel be a part of a collaborative school-site team that focuses on the “culture and climate” of schools.<sup>235</sup>

### *Criteria for hire*

Most SSOs transitioned into Culture Keepers. OUSD emphasizes recruiting Ambassadors and Culture Keepers from the local community. Because OUSD is moving towards a relational restorative justice model, they find it important to employ

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<sup>232</sup> OUSD District Official, personal communication, May 23, 2022.

<sup>233</sup> OUSD District Official, personal communication, May 23, 2022.

<sup>234</sup> OUSD District Official, personal communication, May 23, 2022.

<sup>235</sup> Oakland Unified School District. (2020, December). *George Floyd district safety plan phase 1 (adoption)*. P.22 Retrieved June 11, 2022, from <https://oaklandside.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/20-2147-Board-Memorandum-Resolution-Plan-George-Floyd-District-Safety-Plan-Phase-1-Second-Reading-1292020.pdf>

individuals who grew up in the community, went to OUSD schools, and know many of the parents and community members personally.<sup>236</sup>

According to OUSD's position description for the Culture Keepers role, they are required to have a high school diploma, and are preferred to have 5 years of experience in restorative justice, behavioral health, social justice, conflict mediation/resolution, or a related field. Additionally, OUSD highly prefers candidates that have 5 years of relevant experience working in an urban school district, and bilingual Spanish is preferred, but not required. Culture Keepers must be able to attend school activities and work a minimum of 10 Saturdays during the year.<sup>237</sup>

### *Training*

Culture Keepers have worked closely with the Behavioral Unit to be trained in restorative justice, de-escalation techniques, and trauma-informed practices. They are trained in Safety Care, a behavioral intervention approach that has a heavy emphasis on de-escalation techniques and least restrictive responses, with physical restraints as a last resort. The goal is to have all personnel involved in using a relationship model rather than a punitive model.<sup>238</sup>

### *After-school hours*

It is unclear how OUSD is providing safety in after-school activities at this time.

## **Discipline Procedures/Crisis Response**

### *Changes in discipline procedures*

A team of BOP members, OUSD administrators, attorneys, and community representatives reviewed OUSD policies and made changes to its discipline procedures. The revisions included deleting policies that pertained entirely to OSPD, establishing the expectation that the OUSD staff will limit police calls to situations that pose real and immediate physical threats, modifying language to minimize the use of law enforcement, and limiting the role of law enforcement to that of a consultant on writing and developing a safety plan (as required by Ed Code).<sup>239</sup>

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<sup>236</sup> OUSD District Official, personal communication, May 23, 2022.

<sup>237</sup> Oakland Unified School District. (2020, December). *George Floyd district safety plan phase 1 (adoption)*. p.200. Retrieved June 11, 2022, from <https://oaklandside.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/20-2147-Board-Memorandum-Resolution-Plan-George-Floyd-District-Safety-Plan-Phase-1-Second-Reading-1292020.pdf>

<sup>238</sup> OUSD District Official, personal communication, May 23, 2022.

<sup>239</sup> Oakland Unified School District. (2020, December). *George Floyd district safety plan phase 1 (adoption)*. P.22 Retrieved June 11, 2022, from <https://oaklandside.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/20->

Additionally, OUSD schools have an internal crisis line previously used to contact the school police unit, but now the number calls the central office where, when appropriate, Culture and Climate Ambassadors are deployed.

Liability insurance has not changed with the new safety model.<sup>240</sup>

### *Formal agreement with law enforcement*

OUSD does not have a formal agreement with law enforcement. The district has clear procedures to navigate communication and contact with law enforcement, but do not believe an agreement is required.<sup>241</sup>

### *Mandatory reporting*

The Oakland Schools Police Mandatory Safety Protocol was previously included in all school safety plans and the district's Secondary Comprehensive Culture Guide. This protocol has been replaced with a more detailed document which provides OUSD staff instruction for the specific circumstances for which law enforcement must be contacted or notified. The document, called Law Enforcement Protocols, identifies which situations require a mandatory call to law enforcement, which require a prompt notification (i.e. within the day), which incidents require a written report be submitted to law enforcement, which require prompt law enforcement notification if a student is suspended, and under which conditions OUSD has a mandatory referral to Criminal Justice or Juvenile Delinquency System.<sup>242</sup>

In accordance to state law, instances that require a 911 call include: medical emergencies, bomb threats/bomb discovery, fire, death on school site, serious injury, drive-by shooting on school site, shooting, sniper, or person brandishing a weapon or explosive, armed robbery or hostage situation, abduction/kidnapping, major violent crime in progress, a mass casualty event, emergency building evacuation, or any situation where lives are in danger.<sup>243</sup>

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2147-Board-Memorandum-Resolution-Plan-George-Floyd-District-Safety-Plan-Phase-1-Second-Reading-1292020.pdf

<sup>240</sup> OUSD District Official, personal communication, May 23, 2022.

<sup>241</sup> OUSD District Official, personal communication, May 23, 2022.

<sup>242</sup> Oakland Unified School District. (2020, December). *George Floyd district safety plan phase 1 (adoption)*. Appendix 5. Retrieved June 11, 2022, from <https://oaklandside.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/20-2147-Board-Memorandum-Resolution-Plan-George-Floyd-District-Safety-Plan-Phase-1-Second-Reading-1292020.pdf>

<sup>243</sup> Oakland Unified School District. (2020, December). *George Floyd district safety plan phase 1 (adoption)*. See footnote 4. Retrieved June 11, 2022, from <https://oaklandside.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/20-2147-Board-Memorandum-Resolution-Plan-George-Floyd-District-Safety-Plan-Phase-1-Second-Reading-1292020.pdf>

Additionally, OUSD revised their Discipline Matrix and other OUSD policies to align with the updated Law Enforcement Protocols. OUSD reviewed and revised the Discipline and Intervention Matrix to highlight nine student rule violations that require notification to police.<sup>244</sup> When law enforcement is notified, the Culture and Climate Ambassadors are deployed to the site to help support the process and help prevent events from escalating and from someone getting hurt. The goal is for Ambassadors to support students and families and engage the police to the least degree possible.

### *Crisis response*

OUSD has a Comprehensive District Safety and Climate Plan which serves as a framework to help each school develop a School Safety Plan. OUSD's School Year: 2021-2022 Comprehensive School Safety Plan outlines its School Safety/Climate Team, Safety Plan Goals, District Safety Policies and Procedures, Emergency Disaster Procedures and Drills, Chain of Command, Safe Ingress and Egress, OUSD Emergency Response and Notification Protocol, and other programs/services on campus.<sup>245</sup>

OUSD states its strategy is to move from enforcement to relational approaches.<sup>246</sup> Most OUSD disciplinary challenges relate to students fighting. Since students are no longer suspended for behaviors such as defiance, most student suspensions are due to peer-to-peer conflict. OUSD's new safety model relies on Culture Keepers to de-escalate and prevent fights, relying heavily on de-escalation and trauma-informed practices. For more serious incidents, OUSD relies on the additional support of Culture and Climate Ambassadors.<sup>247</sup>

Previously, OSPD primarily responded to external problems coming onto school campuses, such as students from another school coming to shoot OUSD students or adults coming onto campus to engage in violence. Now, the Culture and Climate Ambassadors are deployed to schools for these instances. Importantly, Ambassadors are not armed, but rather are individuals who are embedded in the community and can use their relational capital to de-escalate situations. Many Ambassadors know and have

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<sup>244</sup> Oakland Unified School District. (2020, December). *George Floyd district safety plan phase 1 (adoption)*. Figure 5: Student Discipline and Intervention Matrix. Retrieved June 11, 2022, from <https://oaklandside.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/20-2147-Board-Memorandum-Resolution-Plan-George-Floyd-District-Safety-Plan-Phase-1-Second-Reading-1292020.pdf>

<sup>245</sup> Oakland Unified School District. (2020, December). *George Floyd district safety plan phase 1 (adoption)*. Figure 5: Student Discipline and Intervention Matrix. Retrieved June 11, 2022, from <https://oaklandside.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/20-2147-Board-Memorandum-Resolution-Plan-George-Floyd-District-Safety-Plan-Phase-1-Second-Reading-1292020.pdf>

<sup>246</sup> OUSD District Official, personal communication, May 23, 2022.

<sup>247</sup> OUSD District Official, personal communication, May 23, 2022.



relationships with community members and parents and rely on these relationships to help solve challenging situations.<sup>248</sup>

Additionally, OUSD developed a clear mental health crisis response plan that does not include the use of police. OUSD has emphasized the importance of prevention efforts in these responses, such as building relationships and trust between adults on campus, students, and families, making sure that school sites have social workers and mental health providers, and that administrators and teachers are apprised of students' IEP, 504 and COST plans, specifically those with detailed behavioral intervention plans. OUSD believes these prevention efforts allow for early detection of potential mental health crises. For instances when school personnel believe a student may pose a threat to themselves or others, appropriate behavioral health professionals will conduct a screening to determine the risk level and develop next steps.<sup>249</sup>

### *Facilities*

It does not appear that OUSD has made changes to its facilities in relation to its new safety model.

### **Staff Support & Wraparound Services**

One-time COVID-19 funds allowed OUSD to expand wraparound staff support. Many sites received additional case managers and social workers. However, these positions will not necessarily be sustained because they have been created with one-time funding.<sup>250</sup>

Currently, OUSD has a George Floyd Resolution Design Team that is made of community groups, such as the Black Organizing Project, and district personnel involved in behavioral and safety responses. The design team works to receive feedback on the implementation of the new safety plan from the community and collaborates with stakeholders to further develop plans. The goal of the team is to find promising strategies to shift from a policing strategy of behavioral response to a community-relational strategy.<sup>251</sup>

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<sup>248</sup> OUSD District Official, personal communication, May 23, 2022.

<sup>249</sup> Oakland Unified School District. (2020, December). *George Floyd district safety plan phase 1 (adoption)*. P.24 Retrieved June 11, 2022, from <https://oaklandside.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/20-2147-Board-Memorandum-Resolution-Plan-George-Floyd-District-Safety-Plan-Phase-1-Second-Reading-1292020.pdf>

<sup>250</sup> OUSD District Official, personal communication, May 23, 2022.

<sup>251</sup> OUSD District Official, personal communication, May 23, 2022.

## School Climate/Culture

In an effort to improve school climate and ensure that school personnel do not make frequent police calls, all school staff are trained in new protocols and visual guides are placed in all school sites. According to OUSD's Phase 1 Plan, administrators, teachers, support staff, and behavioral health staff will be trained in trauma-informed and culturally-relevant verbal de-escalation training, and will use new protocols and flowcharts for mental health emergencies. Administrators, teachers, and support staff are also expected to receive mental health first aid training. However, only Culture and Climate Ambassadors and Assistants and special education teachers and support staff are expected to be trained in verbal and physical school Crisis Prevention Intervention (CPI). Additionally, according to the Phase 1 Plan, administrators, social workers, and community-based providers of behavioral health services will receive refresher training in mental health and child abuse response protocols before each school year.<sup>252</sup>

Furthermore, OUSD has found students are returning to school with increased mental health issues and feelings of isolation and alienation. Therefore, as OUSD makes the shift to police-free schools during a return to in-person learning, they are emphasizing community building efforts within the classroom.<sup>253</sup> For example, OUSD is expanding on its use of restorative justice practices to better fit the needs of students returning to in-person learning. OUSD has recognized that restorative justice practices help repair relationships after events happen, but first, people need to be in relationships to have something to repair. As many students return to the classroom after years of remote learning, OUSD has learned that there needs to be more preventative classroom community building for restorative practices to be effective. One strategy to increase feelings of connectedness is by expanding the use of classroom community-building circles.<sup>254</sup>

## Challenges/Lessons/Outcomes

OUSD learned a lot from the process of eliminating school police. Below, we identified the challenges and future goals of their new safety model, as well as advice they offered.

To start, the context of the COVID-19 pandemic created practical and cultural challenges. For instance, the first half of the 2021-2022 school year required managing classroom coverage, as many students and teachers were out sick or in quarantine.

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<sup>252</sup> Oakland Unified School District. (2020, December). *George Floyd district safety plan phase 1 (adoption)*. P.26 Retrieved June 11, 2022, from <https://oaklandside.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/20-2147-Board-Memorandum-Resolution-Plan-George-Floyd-District-Safety-Plan-Phase-1-Second-Reading-1292020.pdf>

<sup>253</sup> OUSD District Official, personal communication, May 23, 2022.

<sup>254</sup> OUSD District Official, personal communication, May 23, 2022.

This resulted in OUSD being unable to fully implement the programs and training outlined in the new safety model. As mentioned previously, OUSD is also adjusting to students returning to in-person learning with increased feelings of isolation and alienation. As such, OUSD viewed this last school year as similar to a pilot year, as they identify and respond to the gaps in its new model.<sup>255</sup>

Additionally, OUSD recognized the importance of building internal capacity of schools to shift from a policing model to a community-relational model of crisis response. Currently, Cultural and Climate Ambassadors are deployed to schools to help manage crisis situations. This structure follows a standard policing model that relies on outside individuals who do not have strong relationships with students. For instance, instead of calling the police, schools now call the crisis team, which continues a dependency on a central response. Having central office response and support is important and will continue, but OUSD finds it critical to work on building the capacity of individual school sites to handle much of the conflict mediation and crisis intervention. Since staff in schools know the students, these individuals are better situated to de-escalate students than an outside response team.<sup>256</sup>

OUSD is developing School Site Safety Teams for next school year, aiming to build site capacity. These teams will include staff (e.g., assistant principals, principals, case managers, restorative justice facilitators, etc.) responding to crises and training them in the Safety Care Model.

Additionally, OUSD is also investing in building site-based coordination service teams, or post-crisis response teams, that connect students to available resources after behavioral events. While OUSD already has a similar model for community crises, they believe it is important to have a similar network for disciplinary events, such as fights.<sup>257</sup>

Overall, the Oakland community was receptive to the changes in the OUSD safety model. However, OUSD found that the people having the most difficulties with changes were the school principals. Many administrators believe the changes led to more work and responsibility to keep students safe in addition to heading academics. With that in mind, OUSD believes schools need to have site-based teams so that there is a communal response, not an individual response, to behavioral and crisis events. In short, for the new safety model to be successful, it must be a team effort.

A key suggestion from OUSD was to build school site safety plans and have school site teams trained prior to eliminating the safety model a district has in place. Due to the quick transition and limitations due to the COVID-19 pandemic, OUSD found that the

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<sup>255</sup> OUSD District Official, personal communication, May 23, 2022.

<sup>256</sup> OUSD District Official, personal communication, May 23, 2022.

<sup>257</sup> OUSD District Official, personal communication, May 23, 2022.

changes caused a lot of stress on employees. The nature of managing multiple changes simultaneously led to burnout for experienced and respected OUSD staff, causing additional challenges for the district.<sup>258</sup>

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<sup>258</sup> OUSD District Official, personal communication, May 23, 2022.

## KEY FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

This section synthesizes the information presented above into the most salient findings that shaped how districts approach new safety models. The section concludes with some general recommendations.

### **Findings**

An examination of six districts in different areas of the United States suggests that reimagining safety in schools is a recent endeavor with no dominant paradigm or model. Each district in the study is still in the process of developing and refining a safety model, each at a different stage in the implementation process. However, there are several trends that stand out. Below are some of the more germane ideas that might be of particular interest to Phoenix Union.

#### ***The process of reimagining school safety is unfolding and requires time***

Several districts reported feeling like they were “building the plane while flying it,” suggesting that implementing a new safety model involves learning and adjusting on the spot. They also indicated that developing a lasting safety model requires time and resources. This was a common theme among school officials interviewed and points to problems that could be avoided at the outset of the process.

#### ***Building a good student culture is important, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic***

Because of the timing, all districts interviewed had to navigate the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the return to in-person learning while implementing new school safety policies. This posed practical and cultural challenges. For example, at the practical level, districts reported difficulties with adjusting resources, like having enough healthy staff to work the safety protocols. The rotation of staff in and out of quarantine made implementation difficult. This was one of the main hindrances reported in engaging staff in new training, or during implementation of new programs.

Student culture also surfaced as an important issue. Several districts stated that it was a challenging year for students returning to school after multiple years of upheaval and remote learning. Districts stated that many students, especially middle school students, returned to school with increased mental health related issues and feelings of isolation and alienation. Districts found that one of the most important aspects of implementing a successful school safety model is rebuilding a positive school culture and student connections. This was specifically true for districts that rely on restorative justice practices. It is essential that schools invest time and resources in building student connections and relationships so that there is a foundation to restore to when incidents

occur. For example, Oakland Unified School District is working on building student connections through techniques such as classroom community building circles.<sup>259</sup>

***Build internal capacity in schools: A successful safety model requires more than a centralized team and change of personnel***

Each district's safety plan included changes to personnel and an emphasis on de-escalation and trauma-informed training. However, a common theme found among districts is a recognition that roles and responsibilities important to school safety are not isolated to the safety personnel. Rather, safety requires a group effort, and it starts in the schools with support from the district office.

All districts began their new safety models by changing safety personnel and development of centralized teams that respond to crises. However, this strategy resulted in safety personnel engaging with students who they did not know well. In time, several districts recognized a need to build capacity within each school capable of handling conflict mediation and crisis intervention.

Districts in the study reported providing personnel based at each school strong tools to respond to behavioral issues and crisis events. For example, Oakland Unified School District is developing School Site Safety Teams composed of staff located at each school, made responsible for behavior intervention. This staff is trained in the same way that Culture Keepers are with Oakland Unified School District's Safety Care Model. Likewise, Minneapolis Public Schools now delivers the Crisis Prevention Institute training program to provide nonviolent crisis intervention training to all staff, and it includes a yearly refresher course. These efforts aim to build a similar language and a school culture with a common understanding. It also aims to build similar skills across all staff in case they have to respond to a situation.

Regardless of the localization of safety teams in schools, all districts reported that having a central office response team is also essential and will continue. However, increasing the capacity of school sites to better handle behaviors and discipline is key in shifting from a policing model to a community model of crisis response. Since staff located in schools know the students, they are in a better position to build relationships and use de-escalation techniques that prevent the need for law enforcement involvement.

Notably, many districts reported that principals had a difficult time adjusting to new safety models. For instance, a principal in the Madison Metropolitan School District in Madison, Wisconsin believed that her school is less safe than it was before, and that the school site feels left alone to handle serious concerns. Other districts also reported that administrators feel as though they are now solely responsible for providing safety while

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<sup>259</sup> Note: See Appendix B for more information regarding school programs.

also managing numerous other responsibilities. Thus, it appears that districts are finding it difficult to have administrators and staff embrace new safety models. Thus, any changes to safety models will require intentional efforts to change how staff, faculty, and adults within schools think about safety. Buy-in will be important, as well as an understanding that safety requires a network effort.

***Mentors over muscle: Issues with armed personnel***

All districts developed a safety model that moved from a punitive to a relational approach. In other words, safety personnel training emphasizes strong relationships with students instead of discipline. While safety staff enforce school codes of conduct, each district made efforts to change the perception of safety staff to being that of a mentoring role, using de-escalation techniques and trauma-informed practices to address disciplinary issues. Further, each district trained safety personnel in nonviolent crisis intervention (such as CPI, Handle with Care, or the Safety Care Model), which stresses de-escalation and the use of least-restrictive interventions. Districts also emphasize the importance of initial and ongoing training for all staff.

None of the districts in this research use armed personnel or allow staff to use equipment such as handcuffs or pepper spray. Districts found employing armed personnel would have increased liability insurance and was largely unwanted by students and local communities. Additionally, the majority of the districts decided that safety staff should not have uniforms in an effort to avoid the perception of law enforcement and the resulting power dynamic. Some districts use polo shirts to identify their safety personnel.

***Least amount of contact with law enforcement, but not none***

All districts interviewed had some degree of mandatory reporting to law enforcement. Law enforcement notification is typically required for incidents involving guns, minor sexual assault, bomb threats, or other situations where the emergency is beyond the school's capacity to manage the situation. All of the districts examined communicate with local law enforcement agencies rather than sheriff's departments or university police officers. Some districts explicitly stated that they looked into using other agencies, but none would agree due to political concerns of overstepping the local police department.

Because law enforcement notification is required by law, each district developed some level of relationship with law enforcement or a communication strategy. Several districts reported the loss of communication with local law enforcement after developing their new safety protocols, leading to less influence over which officer responds to a call.

For instance, districts previously relied on the law enforcement officers stationed in schools to directly communicate with other responders when issues arose. Since the

discontinuation of SROs, district managers struggled to navigate communication with first responders. Thus, several districts suggested that rebuilding relationships with law enforcement is key to ensure quick responses to calls and the deployment of officers who work well with students.

Additionally, lack of formal agreements with law enforcement agencies caused many inconsistencies in handling of student incidents across the district. For example, without clear agreements, one school administrator might agree to allowing officers to pick up a student from school, while another administrator in the same district may not, resulting in inconsistent procedures. Furthermore, some districts struggled to communicate with law enforcement agencies during 911 calls. Charlottesville City Schools, for example, found that many school staff felt frustrated when making 911 calls and needed to develop a communication strategy. Charlottesville City Schools found that it is essential to designate one staff member to be responsible for calling 911 and speaking with dispatchers without interruption during incidents, leaving other staff to engage with the students involved.

### ***Safety teams function as mediators between students and law enforcement***

Districts developed a strategy to prevent placing students in harmful legal situations and limit police contact. For instance, some districts are required by law to notify law enforcement for certain events, but the law is unclear on when and how this is done. Thus, some districts will first consult with their legal department and create a strategy before calling 911. In some cases, they might even let the student go home before notifying law enforcement. Other districts' centralized safety personnel are deployed to school sites when there is an incident that requires law enforcement notification. The goal of this strategy is for safety staff to support students and families and prevent police contact from escalating. In other words, many districts are using safety teams as mediators between students and law enforcement. Additionally, many districts rely heavily on their legal department and Title IX office to navigate issues as they arise.

Limiting police involvement within the context of state laws continues to be a challenging issue. As the districts move forward with new safety models, navigating the role of law enforcement will require careful notice.

### **Recommendations**

Each district interviewed provided insights and recommendations. Below, we identify potentially useful procedural and programmatic recommendations for districts engaging with these ideas.

#### **Procedural**

Reimagining school safety is a long-term effort, not a one-year fix. Although each district in this study has taken different approaches, they unanimously recommended that



others dedicate enough time and resources to their efforts. Several reported that the political will to develop a new safety model got ahead of the practical ability to do so, resulting in numerous unforeseen gaps in their designs, causing additional challenges.

Although the research interview protocol did not specifically ask whether districts consulted their communities regarding the development of alternative safety models, it is worth considering since it did come up in some instances. Districts reported gathering community feedback as they navigated the implementation of new safety plans. They also stated that they consulted with communities through surveys, community meetings, and/or committees composed of students, parents, staff, community groups, and mental health professionals. Some districts chose to consult with law enforcement when developing their new safety plans, either due to legal requirements or as a way to maintain engagement with local law enforcement.

Given that the SRO issue in schools is a heated topic with a wide range of perspectives, GCI suggests that districts consider engaging with various communities at the front end regarding plans to develop new safety models. We do not have specific recommendations on what a community consultative process should be as this was not a focus of this research.

### ***Phased implementation approaches are recommended***

The first phase of developing a new safety model should include the creation of a team dedicated to planning and outlining each aspect of school safety. That is, we recommend assembling a team of individuals who can carefully develop a safety model, with phased-in implementation timelines. Team members can include individuals involved in district safety, behavioral support, administrators, community groups, or law enforcement liaisons.

Before hiring additional staff, a planning team should take time designing responsibilities, modes of accountability, information flows, and identifying who is consulted given any potential incident within the district. In other words, a team should map potential situations that could potentially occur in a school building, identify the ideal way the district would respond in each instance, and clearly define staff responsibilities. While a successful safety model requires every school department to work together in safety prevention and response efforts, there needs to be clear guidelines developed to determine who is responsible for each scenario. It is recommended that districts build school-specific safety plans as well as centralized response plans. An example of how this can be done is with the development of a RACI Matrix which defines who is responsible, accountable, consulted, and informed for specific tasks.

Once districts have identified who “owns” each component of school safety, a safety model can be developed that encompasses the full range of plans needed by a district

to ensure that there are no gaps in the process. Gaps can include areas where either too many people are responsible for a component of safety, an individual or group is responsible for too many components of safety, or there is a component of safety where no one is identified as being responsible.

It is important that a safety model fits the district's plans, not the other way around.

***If possible, hire, train, and build safety teams after building a thorough safety plan***

It is prudent to not “build the plane while flying it.” Thus, giving time for development and implementation is recommended. Districts should start developing their safety model by identifying all potential school incidents (including threats of and actual violence), how each incident should be handled, and who is responsible. After that phase, districts can outline the safety personnel needed to fill the gaps. This could be a second phase of implementation. District and site-based planning should specifically account for how staff will respond in all instances when an SRO would previously be asked to respond to an issue. This information should inform subsequent phases of the planning process.

It is recommended that if districts choose to have safety personnel that these individuals are hired and trained in de-escalation, trauma-informed, restorative practices, and nonviolent crisis intervention techniques before being placed in schools. One way districts have done so is by making these 220-day positions so that safety personnel can be trained in the weeks prior to the school year. Importantly, it is recommended that districts develop strong site safety plans and train safety personnel prior to eliminating the structure they currently have in place to prevent school staff stress and burnout.

***Build the capacity of schools to handle conflict mediation and crisis intervention***

Districts continued developing and implementing a community-relational model of crisis response for several years. To do so, districts built the internal capacity of schools in addition to changing safety-specific personnel and departments. As discussed above, many school administrators struggled with new district safety models, mainly because they felt as though more responsibility and obligations were placed on them. Therefore, it is recommended that as districts move forward with a new safety model, all staff are consulted, informed, and involved in the process. This can be done via town halls or surveys or an internal communications strategy. Or it can involve significant training in de-escalation and trauma-informed practices for all staff. Districts should also consider training all staff in nonviolent crisis intervention techniques. These efforts are directed at building a common culture of safety as well as involving all staff in the process.

Similarly, it is recommended that districts develop multidisciplinary wraparound teams. Examples include site-based coordination service teams or post-crisis response teams,

that connect students to available resources after behavioral events. It is important to recognize that unwanted student behaviors are not simply solved when safety personnel step in (such as breaking up a fight). Students need to be connected to a multidisciplinary support network after behavioral or disciplinary events, as well as linked to resources and guidance. Another way to build a network of support is to position safety under the umbrella of health, rather than operations. By doing so, safety teams and personnel can be better connected to student support providers such as mental health and social workers. Recognizing the resource limitations of school districts, it is recommended that districts prioritize hiring or maintaining staff that can provide students with wraparound support.

### **Programmatic Strategies**

Below, we identify promising programs and strategies.

#### ***Safety personnel should be trained in the latest culturally responsive practices***

All the districts examined in the study are using on-site personnel that build strong relationships with students, as well as centralized teams that can be deployed to school sites for extra support. Districts who chose to use safety personnel should consider implementing something similar, building both centralized and localized dedicated staff.

All safety-personnel should be trained in de-escalation skills, culturally responsive race and gender practices, mental health responses, restorative justice, and first aid.

Additionally, all districts examined trained their staff in nonviolent crisis intervention practices (such as CPI, Handle with Care, Mandt, or the Safety Care Model), which emphasizes de-escalation and the use of least-restrictive interventions. Further, many districts used a modified School Security Officer certification program through the local department of criminal justice services. All staff should receive initial training before being placed in schools and receive frequent training to refresh and expand skills.

We recommend that safety personnel have the least abrasive appearance possible (i.e., no uniforms or shirts that identify themselves), are unarmed, and do not use traditional restraining or incapacitating police equipment. Furthermore, many districts have found it useful to assign site-based safety personnel to a cohort (example: having personnel follow a grade through school completion, then cycle back again). Safety personnel should rely on their relational capital to de-escalate and respond to behavioral problems and crisis situations.

#### ***Revisit the safety model to detail clear disciplinary procedures, outlining responsibilities and lines of communication***

Districts reported that changes to safety personnel did not impact liability insurance, but armed safety personnel would increase liability. Additionally, all districts stated that new

safety plans did not require changes to active shooter scenarios, largely because prior law enforcement personnel were not directly involved in the resolution of these emergencies.

All districts also follow state legal requirements to notify law enforcement of specific incidents. However, the districts in this research made significant efforts in limiting student-police contact by consulting with their legal departments, creating plans for how law enforcement is notified, and having staff facilitate contact between law enforcement and students.

It is recommended that districts developing new safety models build on preventive practices and de-escalation techniques and increase internal capacity of schools to respond to student behavior. Additionally, if law enforcement notification is legally required, it is recommended that districts develop clear procedures and use staff as a mediator between students/families and law enforcement.

Further, many districts found benefits to having formalized agreements with law enforcement, although some chose not to, or were unsuccessful in doing so. If a district chooses not to have a formal agreement with local law enforcement, then it is recommended that the district implement clear policies and procedures across the district to prevent inconsistencies among schools and create a framework for police engagement and accountability.

### ***Keep a focus on programs that target school climate and culture***

Many districts profiled by this research project implemented programs focused on student social-emotional skills, restorative justice, and conflict mediation long before separating from the use of law enforcement. However, since implementing a new safety model, districts are working to expand and develop these programs. Importantly, these programs are successful when districts dedicate time and resources for their implementation. It is recommended that districts developing a new safety model continue to embrace these practices and implement them across the district.

## **CONCLUSION**

School districts in the United States will continue to debate the role, function, and effectiveness of law enforcement's engagement in school in the years to come. Currently, many districts are looking for holistic approaches to safety in schools, adopting a variety of strategies (as outlined above) to reduce harm. Current research points to concerns regarding SROs, including that they fuel the school-to-prison pipeline and the disproportionate criminalization of underserved students. Fixing this problem will take time, effort, and planning.

It is also worth noting that safety is only one component of the ongoing debate over the use of law enforcement in schools. Part of the discussion includes increasing evidence that significant counseling programs in schools produce students with higher academic scores and higher reported happiness on the safety of the institution. This is why there are calls for more investment in mental health support, along with good staffing ratios that allow for wraparound student services. These trends point toward a holistic understanding of safety, one with a complex understanding of harm. That is, while student harm can include youth violence, harm also comes from other sources in our society, including entry into the criminal justice system. Thus, reducing punitive measures, particularly those linked to formal systems of punishment, can also reduce harm. The lessons learned above point to possible next steps in securing physical, psychological, and social safety for the next generation of students and their communities.

## **Appendix A: Interview Protocol**

Below is the interview protocol used during each of the semi-structured interviews. This approach allowed for flexibility in gathering information.

### **Reimagining School Safety Interview Protocol**

Thank you for making time to meet with me today. My name is Laura Rethmann. I am a consultant for the Grand Canyon Institute. I am conducting research for the Phoenix Union High School District regarding school safety models that utilize alternatives to School Resource Officers.

Specifically, I am interviewing people from districts that have recently changed their relationship with law enforcement in schools to learn about how they are now providing safety on their school campuses in order to give Phoenix Union insight for ideas moving forward. For your information, Phoenix Union enrolls 28,000 students in 22 high schools serving 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may choose to decline questions or to withdraw from the interview at any time. The results of this study may be published in the future, however any information that could identify individual responses will be concealed to the best of my ability.

I anticipate our conversation to last between 60 and 90 minutes, and with your permission, I would like to audio tape the interview. Please remember that you may choose not to answer any questions, and that you may stop the recording at any time. Once I transcribe the interview, the audio will be immediately erased. Are you okay with me making an audio recording?

[set up audio recorder]

I am recording now. Do you have any questions about the research project or the process before we start?

### **Interview Questions**

This interview has three parts. First, I will ask about the process of shifting away from the use of [insert SRO, SEO, police] on your district's campuses.

Second, I will ask about the program design and where your district is in the process of implementing alternatives.

Third, I will ask about challenges or possible adjustments that might have occurred during implementation and any outcomes you have observed regarding these changes.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

1. First, I would like to know a little more about your (school/district's) background. What can you tell me about the move away from your district's [SROs, SEOs, etc.]?
  - a. What do you see as being the biggest reason for this shift?
  - b. How was school safety being provided before these changes?
    - i. Roles, scope, locations, funding?
  - c. Were there specific stakeholders or community groups that impacted the development and implementation of your new safety strategies?
    - i. Who/ to what extent/ how?

Next, I would like to understand how you think your district interprets harm and safety. Can you tell me about the ways in which the district has discussed and defined school safety?

- d. What harms occurring in schools do you see the district trying to address?
    - i. What type of offenses were common in your schools?
    - ii. Can you provide me with a breakdown of offenses?
  - e. What aspects of [SROs, SEOs, etc.] is the district trying to remove/eliminate?
2. The next set of questions are about your district's new program design. I'm going to ask you about the ways [Blank School District] is currently providing for the safety of its schools, and what you know about the goals moving forward.

PROMPTS:

1. To start, how is school safety currently being provided?
2. What strategies have been used?
3. I see that [Blank School District] is now using [Blank Safety Personnel]. Can you tell me about their responsibilities?
  - a. *What does their typical day look like?*
  - b. *What qualifications are required for this role?*
  - c. *How many safety personnel are in the district/ each school?*
  - d. *What initial/ongoing training is provided?*
4. Since the separation from [SROs, SEOs, etc.], has your school/district introduced additional services and supports to meet the safety needs on your campuses? (This is in addition to the implementation of any new safety personnel).
  - a. *Can you tell me more about how these operate?*
  - b. *Have there been any additional or ongoing training for other positions in the district?*
5. What can you tell me about how all these structures are being implemented (time, duration, funding, staff involved)?

6. As far as you know, where in the process of this shift away from [SRO, SEO, etc.] is the district currently?
  - a. What do you know about future steps/goals?
7. Now that the district is in the process of implementing new safety strategies, are there still active community engagement or communication strategies?
  - a. *What do these look like?*
8. How is safety being provided for after-school activities?
  - a. *Have after-school programs been impacted in any way?*

3. The last questions I have are about the program considerations and any outcomes you have seen so far.

1. To start, how do you think school size impacts the new safety designs and delivery?
  - a. How did school population impact design & delivery? Demographics?
2. Were there any strategies that the district considered but chose *not* to use?
  - a. For what reasons?
3. Can you describe the current relationship between law enforcement and the school district?
  - a. Did your district change its MOU with law enforcement? What does the new MOU look like?
4. How does your district navigate legal constraints such as mandatory reporting?
  - a. In which situations is the district collaborating with law enforcement? To what extent?
  - b. How does your district handle events such as obtaining drugs/paraphernalia from students?
    - i. How do you dispose of these materials?
  - c. How does your district handle events of sexual assault?
5. Has the district made any changes or additions to responding to active shooter situations?
6. Has the school organization's ability to secure liability insurance policies been impacted?
  - a. If so, how? Was it relevant whether security personnel were armed or unarmed?
7. Legal implications?
8. Logistical arrangements?
  - a. Any changes to school facilities?
9. Can you share information about the school safety model you have in place now and the cost of the SRO program it replaced?

Outcomes:

1. What would you say has been the hardest aspect of this safety strategy to implement?
  - a. The easiest?
2. What have been the pros and cons of this strategy?



- a. Can you describe the challenges?
3. How has the community responded to these changes?
4. Is there any qualitative or quantitative information on the outcomes of these changes?
5. Finally, is there anything you think the district should have done differently now that you have gone through the process?

Thank you again for your time. Is there anything else you think is important for me to know about how your district is reimagining school safety?

4. Do you know of other people in [Blank School District] who would have helpful insights on this topic and may be willing to share their experience with me? If so, would you be comfortable sharing their names and contact information?

[If so, “thanks so much!” If not, “I understand, and I am grateful you’ve taken the time to share your experience with me”]

Thank you for this conversation. Your discussion of these experiences is helpful in understanding how schools are reimagining safety.

## **Appendix B: Descriptions of Programs**

This appendix contains information regarding the common programs used to promote student safety across districts. Since separating from law enforcement, districts have either developed or made further investments in the programs and approaches to student safety. This appendix only identifies some of the formal programs found across the districts examined and it is important to note that districts may be using informal or moderated versions of these programs not identified in this document. Below is a description of common strategies followed by a table identifying the programs used by each district.

### **Restorative Justice**

WCCUSD, OUSD, SPS, MMSD, and MPS have adopted restorative justice practices. Some districts, such as OUSD, have used restorative practices for over a decade, while others, such as MMSD, began their implementation with the discontinuation of SROs. Although restorative justice can include a wide range of approaches, the goal of these practices is to build strong community relationships, resolve conflict through accountability and dialogue, and repair harms without relying on exclusionary actions.<sup>260</sup>

Restorative practices need buy-in from administrators, teachers, and staff and a long-term commitment to build student trust. Although restorative practices take time and effort, research has found that these practices improve relationships, foster a sense of community, are effective in promoting dialogue and accountability, and reduce exclusionary discipline referrals.<sup>261</sup> While schools implement restorative justice practices in various ways, a review of previous studies found most schools that use restorative justice practices reported lower rates of bullying, decreased use of disciplinary referrals, and increased student social skills and self-esteem.<sup>262</sup>

### **Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)**

The use of Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) in schools ranges from structured programming to more informal practices. While implementation varies, SEL aims to help students develop strong communication and problem solving skills while teaching positive relationship building and self-control. In SEL, students and teachers work

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<sup>260</sup> DePaoli, J. L., Hernández, L. E., Furger, R. C., & Darling-Hammond, L. (2021). A restorative approach for equitable education. Learning Policy Institute

<sup>261</sup> Gregory, A. & Evans, K. R. (2020). The starts and stumbles of restorative justice in education: Where do we go from here? Boulder, CO: National Education Policy Center. Retrieved June 7, 2022, from <http://nepc.colorado.edu/publication/restorative-justice>.

<sup>262</sup> Katic, B., Alba, L. A., & Johnson, A. H. (2020). A systematic evaluation of restorative justice practices: School violence prevention and response. *Journal of School Violence*, 19(4), 579–593. Retrieved June 5, 2022, from <https://doi.org/10.1080/15388220.2020.1783670>

together to develop skills that reduce aggression and increase social competencies. SEL programs have five guiding principles: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making.<sup>263</sup>

Five schools interviewed for this research — Oakland Unified School District, Seattle Public Schools, Charlottesville City Schools, Madison Metropolitan School District, and Minneapolis Public Schools — have SEL programs. Many districts have a long history of incorporating SEL practices, but some districts have developed or expanded these programs since separating from law enforcement. For example, Seattle Public Schools outlined intentional efforts to increase SEL practices for the 2021-2022 school year. These efforts include partnerships with community agencies to use SEL practices in out-of-school-time activities, partnering with City of Seattle levy-funded schools to align efforts to anti-racist SEL practices, and applying Social Justice Standards to SEL lessons and practices.<sup>264</sup> Similarly, districts, such as Charlottesville City Schools, have implemented division-wide SEL curriculums. In 2018-2019, Pre-K and Kindergarten classes had an SEL curriculum which expanded to all students, PK-12, in the 2020-2021 school year.<sup>265</sup>

Like restorative practices, SEL programs need time and dedication to be successful. Yet, when schools make a commitment to SEL, research has found students' social, emotional, and mental health improves, and school culture benefits.<sup>266</sup>

### **PBIS or MTSS**

Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is an evidence-based practice that relies on tiered social and academic interventions to address student behaviors. PBIS is designed as a three-tier model. The first tier includes general prevention strategies for all students. The second tier is a more focused effort applied to students identified as

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<sup>263</sup> The Prevention Institute. (2001). Preventing and Reducing School Violence Fact Sheet #3: Strategies, Resources, and Contacts for Developing Comprehensive School Violence Prevention Programs. Oakland, CA. Retrieved June 8, 2022, from

<https://www.preventioninstitute.org/sites/default/files/publications/Strategies%20resources%20and%20contacts%20for%20developing%20comprehensive%20school%20violence%20prevention%20programs.pdf>

<sup>264</sup> Seattle Public Schools. (2021, December 31). *Academic and student well-being recovery plan*. Seattle Public Schools. Retrieved June 7, 2022, from <https://www.seattleschools.org/news/academic-and-student-well-being-recovery-plan/>

<sup>265</sup> Charlottesville City Schools. (n.d.). *Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)*. Charlottesville City Schools. Retrieved June 7, 2022, from <http://charlottesvilleschools.org/social-emotional-learning/>

<sup>266</sup> Durlak, J. A., Weissberg, R. P., Dymnicki, A. B., Taylor, R. D., & Schellinger, K. B. (2011). The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions. *Child development*, 82(1), 405-432.

needing extra support, and the final tier is an individualized process of providing students with intensive wraparound support systems and interventions.<sup>267</sup>

Multi-Tiered System of Supports, or MTSS (sometimes referred to as Response to Instruction and Intervention or RTI2), is similar to PBIS, but often uses more data points to provide targeted support for students. While PBIS emphasizes behavioral needs, MTSS focuses support for students in academic, behavioral, and social-emotional areas. Often, schools that use MTSS have PBIS interventions embedded within. Both frameworks rely on an evidence-based, three-tiered approach to provide student support.<sup>268</sup> Currently, all districts interviewed for this research use either PBIS, MTSS, or a combination of both.

### **African American Student Achievement/Black Excellence Programs**

Districts have recognized the importance of providing extra support to historically marginalized students, and as a result, many have established specific support structures. While districts such as Oakland Unified School District and Seattle Public Schools launched offices for Black male achievement years ago, others have expanded Black student achievement programs as part of their new safety strategy.

West Contra Costa Unified School District, for example, transferred the estimated \$1.5 million budgeted for police services for the 2020-2021 academic year to support Black student achievement programs.<sup>269</sup> As a part of the district's Resolution 46-1920, the Office of African American Student Achievement (OAASA) outlined efforts that began in the fall, 2020. Efforts include mentorship opportunities, targeted interventions, expanding library materials to reflect Black history and culture, and strategies to recruit and retain Black educators to reflect the Black student population.<sup>270</sup> Meanwhile, Minneapolis Public Schools has broadened support for Black students by recently

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<sup>267</sup> Horner, R. H., Sugai, G., & Anderson, C. M. (2010). Examining the evidence base for schoolwide positive behavior support. *Focus on Exceptional Children*, 42(8), 1–15. Retrieved June 8, 2022, from [http://dropoutprevention.org/wpcontent/uploads/2015/05/horner\\_sugai\\_anderson\\_2010\\_evidence.pdf](http://dropoutprevention.org/wpcontent/uploads/2015/05/horner_sugai_anderson_2010_evidence.pdf)

<sup>268</sup> Illuminate Education. (2021, November 5). *MTSS vs RTI vs PBIS – what's the difference?* Illuminate Education. Retrieved June 7, 2022, from <https://www.illuminateed.com/blog/2018/11/mtss-vs-rti-vs-pbis-whats-the-difference/>

<sup>269</sup> Tadayon, A. (2020, August 5). *West Contra Costa unified to rethink student safety after ending police contracts*. EdSource. Retrieved March 15, 2022, from <https://edsources.org/2020/west-contra-costa-unified-to-rethink-student-safety-after-ending-police-contracts/637641>

<sup>270</sup> West Contra Costa Unified School District. (2020). *Resolution 46-1920 In Support of the Achievement and Success of African American / Black Students in the West Contra Costa Unified School District*. Richmond, CA. Retrieved May 27, 2022. from <https://www.wccusd.net/cms/lib/CA01001466/Centricity/Domain/33/Resolution.pdf>

changing the Office of Black Student Achievement to include support for young Black women.<sup>271</sup>

Madison Metropolitan School District, Minneapolis Public Schools, Oakland Unified School District, Seattle Public Schools, and West Contra Costa Unified School District have dedicated support systems for Black students within their district.

### **Expanded Curriculum/Ethnic Studies**

Ethnic studies are studies or programs that center the knowledge and perspectives of an ethnic or racial group. Research has shown ethnic studies increase identity safety, decrease bias, and improve academic engagement.<sup>272</sup> Additionally, research suggests that ethnic studies curriculum can increase students' sense of belonging, grade point average across disciplines, and high school graduation rates.<sup>273</sup>

Many districts examined in this research have adopted or expanded cross-cultural curriculums in conjunction with their new safety models. OUSD, for example, approved Resolution 1920-0246, which develops curriculum to encourage critical analysis of social divisions, tensions, and viewpoints of history across various identities. Additionally, the resolution directs staff to train district high school social studies and other teachers in the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum, creates Oakland-specific course materials, and expands curriculum for middle and elementary school grades.<sup>274</sup>

Likewise, the Seattle Public Schools board has introduced an anti-racism policy and voted to develop a Black studies curriculum for grades K-5, a required Black studies course for middle and high school students,<sup>275</sup> and a district-wide implementation of Since Time Immemorial, Black Studies, and Ethnic Studies.<sup>276</sup> Minneapolis Public

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<sup>271</sup> Minneapolis Public Schools. (n.d.). *Action Plan*. Retrieved May 27, 2022, from [https://blackmales.mpls.k12.mn.us/action\\_plan](https://blackmales.mpls.k12.mn.us/action_plan)

<sup>272</sup> Sleeter. (2011). The Academic and Social Value of Ethnic Studies: A Research Review. In *National Education Association Research Department*. National Education Association Research Department.

<sup>273</sup> Dreilinger, D. (2021, September 7). *Research finds sustained impact from an ethnic studies class*. Retrieved June 12, 2022, from <https://news.stanford.edu/2021/09/06/research-finds-sustained-impact-ethnic-studies-class/>

<sup>274</sup> Oakland Unified School District. (2020, May 27). Adopt Resolution 1920-0246, Affirming Support of AB2016 California Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum Draft Created by Ethnic Studies Experts. Oakland, CA.

<sup>275</sup> Hersey, B., Dewolf, Z., & Hampson, C. (2020, June 24). *School Board Action Report*. Retrieved March 1, 2022, from [https://www.seattleschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/A01\\_20200624\\_Resolution-1920-38-Affirming-SPS-Commitment-to-Black-students\\_Updated20200624.pdf](https://www.seattleschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/A01_20200624_Resolution-1920-38-Affirming-SPS-Commitment-to-Black-students_Updated20200624.pdf)

<sup>276</sup> Seattle Public Schools. (2021, December 31). *Academic and student well-being recovery plan*. Seattle Public Schools. Retrieved June 7, 2022, from <https://www.seattleschools.org/news/academic-and-student-well-being-recovery-plan/>

Schools is making efforts to expand the scope and impact of its ethnic studies curriculum to restore narratives and provide justice-centered content across core content areas.<sup>277</sup>

Charlottesville City Schools, Minneapolis Public Schools, Oakland Unified School District, and Seattle Public Schools have adopted or expanded Ethnic Studies and are making efforts to transform their curriculum to provide students with culturally relevant pedagogy.

### **Inclusive Environments**

Promoting inclusivity increases the physical, emotional, and social safety of marginalized students.<sup>278</sup> Districts can foster inclusive environments through policies and practices. Among these efforts are sexuality and gender specific programs; support systems for immigrant, refugee, and undocumented students; foster-youth groups; Welcoming Schools programs; and anti-bullying programs and policies.

For example, many districts have Gay-Straight Alliances or Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Questioning and Intersex programs which have been shown to increase experiences of safety in schools for students with marginalized gender or sexual identities. Research has found that students that attend schools with Gay Straight Alliances and Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Questioning and Intersex school policies have been associated with less bullying and higher perceived support indicating that these groups and policies foster safer and more supportive school climates.<sup>279</sup> Additionally, some districts such as Madison Metropolitan School District, use the national program known as Welcoming Schools to foster more supportive and respectful schools. Welcoming Schools include professional development, lesson plans, books, and strategies used to promote inclusivity and prevent bias-based bullying.<sup>280</sup>

All of the districts examined in this project have adopted strategies to protect and support students, staff, and families by developing safe and inclusive school environments. However, it is important to note that many districts explored in this

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<sup>277</sup> MN Department of Education . (2020). Achievement and Integration Plan. Minneapolis, MN.

<sup>278</sup> Juvonen, J., Lessard, L.M., Rastogi, R., Schacter, H.L., & Smith, D.S. 2019. Promoting social inclusion in educational settings: Challenges and opportunities. *Educational Psychologist*, 54, 250-270. doi: 10.1080/00461520.2019.1655645

<sup>279</sup> Day, Fish, J. N., Grossman, A. H., & Russell, S. T. (2020). Gay-Straight Alliances, Inclusive Policy, and School Climate: LGBTQ Youths' Experiences of Social Support and Bullying. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 30(S2), 418–430. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jora.12487>

<sup>280</sup> Human Rights Campaign Foundation. (n.d.). *Gender and LGBTQ+ Inclusive Schools*. Retrieved June 12, 2022, from <https://welcomingschools.org/>

research have stated that these programs and policies need continuous investments, and efforts are ongoing.

### **Community Schools**

West Contra Costa Unified School District, Oakland Unified School District, and Madison Metropolitan School District have adopted the Community Schools Model. Community schools, also known as “full-service” schools, began in the United States during the 1990s as a way to serve new immigrant families and students through community partnerships.<sup>281</sup> The Community Schools Model frames schools as a resource that is connected to the larger community ecosystem. Through partnerships and collaboration, community schools offer services for students and their families such as conflict resolution training, mental health services, substance abuse counseling, and job training.<sup>282</sup> While community schools can be implemented in a variety of ways, community schools focus on addressing school safety in a holistic manner with numerous stakeholders participating in establishing school discipline processes and policies.<sup>283</sup> Importantly, community schools have been shown to have positive impacts on student engagement, attendance, teacher retention, and decreased delinquency.<sup>284</sup>

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<sup>281</sup>Lubell, E. (2011). Building community schools: A guide for action. Children's Aid Society. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED540950>

<sup>282</sup> Heers, van Klaveren, C., Groot, W., & Maassen van den Brink, H. (2016). Community Schools: What We Know and What We Need to Know. *Review of Educational Research*, 86(4), 1016–1051. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654315627365>

<sup>283</sup>National Education Association . (n.d.). *The six pillars of Community Schools Toolkit* . Retrieved June 13, 2022, from <https://www.nea.org/sites/default/files/2020-06/Comm%20Schools%20ToolKit-final%20digi-web-72617.pdf>

<sup>284</sup> Gottfredson, Gottfredson, D. C., Payne, A. A., & Gottfredson, N. C. (2005). School Climate Predictors of School Disorder: Results from a National Study of Delinquency Prevention in Schools. *The Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 42(4), 412–444. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022427804271931>

### Common Programs Found Across Districts<sup>285</sup>

<b>Restorative Justice</b>	<b>Social-Emotional Learning</b>	<b>PBIS/MTSS</b>	<b>Black Achievement/Black Excellence Programs</b>	<b>Expanded Curriculum/Ethnic Studies</b>	<b>Inclusive Environments</b>	<b>Community Schools</b>
West Contra Costa Unified School District, California						
X		X	X		X	X
Oakland Unified School District, California						
X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Seattle Public Schools, Washington						
X	X	X	X	X	X	
Charlottesville City Schools, Virginia						
	X	X		X	X	
Madison Metropolitan School District, Wisconsin						
X	X	X	X		X	X
Minneapolis Public Schools, Minnesota						
X	X	X	X	X	X	

<sup>285</sup> Note: This is not an exhaustive list of programs. Additionally, some districts may be implementing these programs in informal ways that we have not recognized as developed programs.



### **Appendix C: Brief Description of Sites**

The table below includes information on districts included in this research project. Information is based on the most recent estimates found at the time of this study.

#### **Selected Case Studies**

<b>School District</b>	<b>Student Body</b>	<b>Schools</b>	<b>Demographics</b>	<b>Date Voted</b>
Seattle Public Schools, WA	51,629	Total Schools: 109 High Schools: 21	Hispanic/Latino: 13.4% White: 45.9% Black or African American: 14.9% Asian: 12.6% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander: 0.4% Two or More Races: 12.4%	June 24, 2020
Oakland Unified School District, CA	36,154	Total schools: 85 High Schools: 20	Hispanic/Latino: 44% Black or African American: 23% White: 12% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander: 1% Two or more: 7%	June 24, 2020
West Contra Costa Unified School District, CA	28,246	Total Schools: 63 High Schools: 9	Hispanic/Latino: 53% Asian: 16% Black or African American: 15% White: 11% Two or More Races: 5%	June 10, 2020
Charlottesville City Schools, VA	4,542	Total Schools: 9 High Schools: 1	Hispanic/ Latino: 13% White: 42% Black or African American: 31% Asian: 6% Two or More Races: 9%	June 11, 2020
Madison Metropolitan School District, WI	26,842	Total Schools: 52 High Schools: 7	Hispanic/Latino: 22% White: 42% Black or African American: 18% Asian: 9% Two or More Races: 9%	June, 2020
Minneapolis Public Schools, MN	31,598	Total Schools: 96 High Schools: 36	White American: 37% Black or African American: 34% Hispanic or Latino American: 17% Asian American: 5% Two or more races: 6% American Indian or Alaska Native: 3% Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander: 0%	June 2, 2020

## **Appendix D: Additional Information**

This appendix provides information on two topics not covered in the research paper above: 1) how districts dispose of confiscated materials, and 2) how they use technology. It is included here in case it is useful.

### **Disposing of confiscated materials**

One concern mentioned during interviews was how to dispose of confiscated materials previously handled by law enforcement. Below are a few of the strategies used.

#### *Drop Safes*

One strategy used by a district is to dispose of materials with drop safes. A district in this project mentioned that law enforcement will no longer retrieve and inventory drugs or weapons. To deal with this issue, they recently distributed 70 drop safes across the district to secure materials while they work to find a better solution. Drop safes provide a place for administrators to store materials securely. However, the district is still considering what they will do when the drop safes are full. The district also encountered another issue: drop boxes are legally challenging, since no one is currently authorized to transport illegal materials. While the district works to develop a new protocol with local law enforcement, they continue to collect and store confiscated materials in drop safes.

#### *Storing Centrally and Disposed*

Another storing method is sealing evidence in an envelope, or something larger if needed. The envelope is then marked with a description of the contents, who it was confiscated from (if known), the date, the name of the staff member who packaged it, and the safety and security incident number for tracking. Items are transported to the central security office and kept in a safe. Then, at the end of the school year, everything is thrown away. If the district does something else with the item, such as return it to an adult in the family, the district documents the item and the circumstances.

For example, the typical practice for confiscating drugs is to bring the materials to the district Safety and Security Office, where it is held for the year then disposed of during the summer. Since marijuana is legal in this state, administrators will occasionally release paraphernalia or vaping material, although the district requires adults to come to the central office to pick it up. The district consults the legal department before releasing any material. Drugs that are illegal are not returned to the family.

Another challenge is the ability to test a substance when a suspect denies what it is. The district has to go to law enforcement to test for 'harder' drugs, such as meth. While incidents like this are extremely rare, it is still an issue that requires consideration.



### *Self Disposal or Police Confiscation*

Another approach to disposing confiscated materials is for administrators to collect the material, with another administrator witnessing, and then proceed to dispose of it. This is done only after contracting the central safety office to document the event. For items such as marijuana, administrators will flush the material and document the disposal. However, for materials such as blades or other non-gun weapons, administrators will confiscate the item and keep it in a locked drawer until after school when the item is disassembled and thrown in the trash. For large confiscated items, the district notifies a local law enforcement agency to pick up and dispose of the item.

### **Technology/Applications to Communicate with Police**

Districts reported significant challenges in communicating with law enforcement during adoption of new safety models. Some districts use computer programs and applications to address this issue.

For example, one district adopted a phone application that allows schools to be geofenced and categories of incidents to be created. For example, schools can create a category for a medical emergency, and when a medical emergency occurs, school staff can press the button and preset information will be sent to law enforcement. For instance, the application can notify law enforcement that there is a medical emergency, where the emergency is occurring, and identify what area of the school building the notification is coming from. The district hopes this app can improve communication channels and response time.

Another district utilized a program that tracks 911 calls throughout the city so that the central office sees every time a 911 call is placed. This helps the central safety office communicate the level of threat they have at the school without requiring direct communication with law enforcement. Additionally, the district has a direct line to the 911 dispatcher, which allows the dispatcher to see that the district is calling and that there is an urgent need. The district has found it beneficial to have these communication channels not tied to SROs.

Another program used by a district in this research is *Securly 24*. *Securly 24* includes trained analysts with backgrounds in related fields from sociology and psychology who monitor and immediately notify schools or district administrators when critical situations involving self-harm, suicidal ideation, or bullying occurs on district-issued devices. These analysts directly contact school officials during school hours and the District Critical Response Team during after-school hours and on weekends, who then will immediately contact the local police department to do a well-check visit. Additionally, administrators are informed to coordinate follow-up support.