AN EVALUATION OF THE EDMONTON CATHOLIC SCHOOL DIVISION'S SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER PROGRAM

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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INTRODUCTION

This document provides an executive summary of the results of an extensive, multi-method evaluation on the Edmonton Catholic School District's (ECSD) School Resource Office (SRO) Program.

1) Part A provides a summary of our review of previous studies on School Resource Officers.

2) Part B summarizes the results of interviews with members of the Edmonton Police Service (EPS) who have worked as School Resource Officers (SROs) within the ECSD.

3) PART C summarizes the results of interviews with ECSD Principals and Vice-Principals who have direct experience with the SRO program.

4) Part D summarizes the results of focus groups conducted with ECSD teachers with direct experience with the SRO program.

5) PART E summarizes the results of focus groups with ECSD parents.

6) PART F summarizes the results of focus groups with ECSD students with direct SRO experience.

7) PART G summarizes the results of a ECSD teacher survey.

8) PART H summarizes the results of a ECSD parent survey.

9) PART I summarizes the results of the ECSD student survey.

10) PART J summarizes the results of an analysis of official documentation of SRO activities within the ECSD.

11) PART K summarizes key evaluation findings and provides recommendations on how the SRO program could be improved.

PART A: LITERATURE REVIEW

Over the past decade, the use of dedicated police officers within schools – often referred to as School Resource Officers (SROs) -- has become a particularly controversial topic in both Canada and the United States. Advocates for such initiatives, including the police, school officials as well as parents, argue that SROs keep students safe and improve police-community relations (Abela and Donlevy 2020; Duxbury and Bennell 2020; Jennings, Khey, Maskaly, and Donner 2011). Critics, however, argue that SRO programs are intrusive, expensive, biased towards Black, Indigenous, and other marginalized youth (i.e. youth who identity as having a disability or as 2sLGBTQ+), and ultimately contribute to the school-to-prison pipeline (Gottfredson, Crosse, Tang, Bauer, Harmon, Hagen, and Green 2020; Mallet 2015; Merkwae 2015; Kochel, Wilson, and Mastroski 2011). It is these criticisms that have led to the dissolution of many SRO programs within several large Canadian school boards. However, there lacks methodologically sound and rigorous research that explores perceived benefits, concerns related to SRO programs, as well as their impacts on the school community (Gottfredson et al., 2020). This is particularly true in the Canadian context.

The following section will provide a brief overview of the literature exploring SRO programs, situated in the U.S. and Canada. The review will explore the history of SRO programs, the roles and functions of school-based police officers, and their impact(s) on students and other stakeholders. The first section addresses the emergence of law enforcement in schools and the rationale behind school-police partnerships. Following, the stated role(s) and responsibilities of police officers placed in schools is examined. The third section focuses on the effects of SRO programs, specifically looking at research that has assessed the impact of SROs on school crime and incidents of violence, perceptions of safety, the potential criminalization of students, and finally the impact that SRO program may have on youth and police relations. The literature review demonstrates the lack of research exploring SRO programs in Canada, thus demonstrating the importance of the current evaluation.

The Historical Development of SRO programs

- Formal collaborative programs between school boards and police services emerged in the U.S. as early as the 1950's. Some Canadian school boards, including the Edmonton Catholic School Division, developed similar relationships starting in the 1970s (Argyle 2021; Theriot and Cuellar 2016; Theriot and Orme 2016).

- As a consequence of highly publicized school shootings, including the Columbine and Sandy Hook tragedies in the United States (Brown, 2018), and the shooting death of Jordan Manners in Canada (Madan, 2016; McDonald, 2020), the perceived need for police in schools was reinvigorated beginning in the late 1990s.

- The argument for police in schools was supported by emerging research demonstrating a positive relationship between perceived safe school environments and effective teaching and learning (Ratner et al. 2006; Ripski and Gregory 2009).

- To demonstrate the rapid rise of SRO programs in U.S. schools, in 1976, a study conducted by the National Institute of Education (NIE) found that only 1% of U.S. schools had an SRO program. By 2016, a similar study found that 48% of American schools had an SRO, with 65% stationed in secondary schools (Goffredson et al. 2020; Musu-Gillette, Zhang, Wang, Zhang, Kemp, Diliberti, and Oudekerk 2018).

- Similar data cannot be found in Canada. However, an iteration of collaborative agreements between the police and school boards can be found in most provinces. SRO programs have been documented in both elementary, junior high, and high schools (Argyle 2021; Public Safety 2018; RCMP 2018).

SRO Program Objectives

- The specific roles and responsibilities of SROs can vary according to the individual needs of designated schools. However, in North America, standard SRO activities are heavily influenced by The National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO). NASRO promotes a "triad model" which describes the SRO as

  - 1) law enforcers, where SROs patrol school property, respond to calls for service, and conduct criminal inquiries. Law enforcement activities may include the general surveillance of the student body as well as specific criminal investigations.

  - 2) counsellors/mentors, where SROs are tasked with engaging with students, teachers, and school administrators to provide advice on personal and/or legal matters. In this capacity, SROs may engage in discussions about general student behaviour or advise school officials on how to deal with student disciplinary issues, including student criminality.

  - 3) educators, where SROs provide in-class lectures on various public safety issues including bullying, cyberbullying, sexting, sexual assault, and substance use. SROs, it is argued, can also help students learn more about policing and the broader criminal justice system (Broll and Howells 2019; Merkwae 2015; NASRO n.d.; Taylor, Turner, Esbensen, and Winfree 2001).

- Researchers point out that the role of an SRO may depend on the needs of the school community that the SRO is assigned, the personality of the officer, and their relationship with school administration. Thus, articulating a clear definition of the SRO role is difficult and contributes to a lack of understanding of the ideal SRO (McKenna, Martinez-Prather, and Bowman 2016; Fisher and Devlin, 2020).

- Canadian research suggests SROs assigned to high schools predominately acted in the role of law enforcer whereas SROs in elementary schools mainly performed tasks associated with the role of educator and did not engage so much in traditional police work (Broll and Howells, 2019).

- There are concerns intersecting criminal justice actors within the education system can lead to contradictory responsibilities assumed by officers working in school settings. There may be a major conflict in expecting young people to treat law enforcement officers in schools as mentors and/or counsellors, as SROs have the authority to make an arrest and may be more likely to defer to legal recourse if any information is deemed criminogenic. Thus, a major consequence concerns the damage to students' relationships with SROs when the responsibility of the law enforcer takes priority over that of other non-law enforcement duties (Coon and Travis, 2012; Mallett, 2016; Nolan, 2018; Vitale, 2018).

SROs impact on school crime and incidents of violence

- Research on the benefits of SRO programs remains limited and contradictory. This is particularly evident in relation to studies that examine the impact of SRO programs on criminal activity within schools. Using national cross-sectional data from the School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS), some studies observed a negative relationship between the number of SROs and serious crime in high schools in the United States, leading researchers to conclude that SROs may function as a possible deterrent to serious crime (Jennings and et al. 2011; Maskaly, Donner, Lanterman, and Jennings, 2011).

- However, using longitudinal data spanning three years from the same survey (SSOCS), a number of researchers explore a sample of comparative schools, both with and without an SRO to examine whether the presence of an SRO leads to a reduction in various criminal activities including bullying, as well as serious and non-serious violent, property, drug, and weapon related crimes. These studies consistently show that schools with SROs report more crime than schools without an SRO. Thus, there is minimal evidence to suggest that police in schools contribute to school safety (Devlin, Santos, and Gottfredson 2018; Na and Gottfredson 2013; Nance 2016; Pigott et al. 2017; Swartz, Osborne, Dawson, Edwards and Higgins 2016).

- Data from a number of other American studies further suggest that schools with SROs have higher arrest rates and out-of-school suspensions than schools without SRO (Owens 2016; Weisburst 2019). A number of studies also demonstrate that SROs have a disproportionate effect on arrest rates for Black students (Homer and Fisher 2020). However, some researchers suggest these higher rates were typically found in schools that recently implemented an SRO program. They argue that schools with well-established programs (i.e., an officer in the school 3 years or longer) do not have significantly higher arrest rates. This finding suggests that upon implementation, SRO programs may increase school-based arrests. However, this initial increase may diminish after a program is established and the SRO becomes part of the school community (Zhang, 2018).

- The most methodologically rigorous studies exploring the effects of SROs in school consistently demonstrate that the presence of SROs conclude that there is no evidence to support the notion that SRO programs make schools safer (Gottfredson et al. 2020).

- Examining the relationship between SROs and crime/violence in the Canadian context, a 2008/2009 evaluation of the SRO program in Toronto schools found that schools with SROs had a decrease in reported offences, compared to 2007/2008, the year before the program was introduced. The review also highlighted a small uptick in victimization within 200 meters of the school, which suggests that some crime may have been displaced to the neighbouring region as opposed to eliminated altogether. A 2011 follow-up evaluation notes that the *total number* of specific, serious offences (e.g., weapons offences, assault causing bodily harm, aggravated assaults, and robberies) decreased between the 2007/2008 and 2010/2011 period. There was a notable decrease in weapons related offences in particular and an increase in student willingness to report a crime to police. Given the findings, it was concluded the program was successful (Toronto Police Service 2009; Toronto Police Service 2011).

Perceptions of safety

- The argument that perceived safety is an important characteristic of the school environment stems from a number of studies that reveal a positive relationship between perceptions of school safety and academic achievement. Students who feel safe at school may experience less anxiety and thus have an increased capacity to concentrate on school-work and extra-curricular activities (Ratner et al. 2006; Ripski and Gregory 2009).

- Several studies have investigated the effect that SROs have on perceptions of safety in schools, the results from these studies have been somewhat mixed. Studies suggest that this relationship is quite complex when considering race, gender, sexual orientation, ability, and other factors.

- While some studies demonstrate that SROs enhanced feelings of safety among all surveyed stakeholders (parents, teachers, school administrators, students, and SROs), these feelings were more pronounced among school administrators and SROs (Brown and Benedict, 2005; May, Fessel, and Means, 2004; Time and Payne, 2008). This is consistent with other studies that have observed increased perceptions of safety among school administrators and teachers following the implementation of an SRO program as compared to students (Johnson, 1999; May et al., 2004; Madan, 2016).

- Evaluations of Canadian SRO programs have often posed questions related to school safety to respondents. To illustrate, data from student surveys administered as a part of the 2009 Toronto Police SRO program evaluation found that there was no significant difference in perceptions of safety from when students were first surveyed in October 2008 and again in May 2009. At both periods, students reported feeling "very or reasonably safe" in the school and surrounding neighbourhood. Most administrators and teachers reported feeling safe at school and in the surrounding community area with little

difference noted in responses from the beginning to end of the year. With respect to parents, the study noted that perceptions of their child's safety seemed to improve over the school year (Toronto Police Service, 2009).

- In the follow-up evaluation, there were no changes reported for feelings of student safety between May 2009 and May 2011. It was found, however, that "students in schools that have had an SRO for a longer period of time were significantly more likely to say that they thought having the SRO assigned to their school made their school safer". Among school administrators, feelings of safety did not improve and there were not enough data to conduct a follow up analysis on parent's perceptions (Toronto Police Service 2011).

- Adding to the evidence base that SROs positively influence perceptions of school safety, a 2005 review of the North End SRO program in Winnipeg noted that the majority of students surveyed indicated that they agreed that the school feels safer as a result of SRO presence. The review also revealed that all parents agreed that SROs provide a safe learning environment for their child (PRA Inc., 2005).

- Researchers conducting an evaluation of Vancouver's SRO Program also found that the majority of Vancouver School Board students surveyed indicated that they "agreed" or "strongly agreed" with the statement that SRO programs "contribute to a sense of safety in schools". However, the evaluation was one of the first Canadian evaluations to record racial differences in feelings of safety. They note that only 15 per cent of Black students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, with 60 per cent indicating that they disagreed or strongly disagreed. Among Indigenous students close to half (47 per cent) stated that they agreed or strongly agreed, while 33 per cent disagreed or strongly disagreed. Although the consensus on SROs and feelings of school safety from the student population was positive, a deeper analysis suggests that there are important differences in sub-population perceptions (Argyle, 2021).

- These differences were also highlighted as a part of the review of the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB) SRO program. To illustrate, 38 per cent of respondents disagreed with the statement that police presence makes schools safer. Breaking this down by identity, researchers found that 62 per cent Black, 43 per cent Indigenous, 33 per cent Middle Eastern, 36 per cent Muslim, 48 per cent people with disabilities, and 68 per cent 2sLGBTQ+ identifying participants disagreed with this statement (Tanner, 2021).

- While many students, school administrators, parents, and community members believe that school safety is maintained and/or enhanced by SROs, there are critical differences to be acknowledged in perceptions of safety among individuals from marginalized and/or racialized communities. Other factors like past victimization and gender have also been noted to affect perceptions of safety (Brown & Benedict, 2005; Theriot & Orme, 2016).

Criminalization of Student Behaviour: The school-to-prison pipeline

- A major area of concern around SROs in schools continues to be the potential criminalization of student misconduct. In other words, research demonstrates that police in schools can, in fact, turn common student indiscretions on school property into criminal offences. This process, which is often referred to as the "school-to-prison-pipeline," suggests that students who are charged or disciplined by SROs also face school suspensions or expulsions (Brown, Mears, Collier, Montes, Pesta, and Siennick, 2020; Mallett, 2016).

- There are concerns that the consequences associated with SRO charge practices have a disproportionate impact on racialized youth and youth who identify as having a disability. Very few SRO studies centre race and racism, and therefore data exploring the impact of race and SRO charge practices is limited (Javdani 2019; Turner and Beneke 2020). However, recent studies suggest that Black students receive harsher treatment from SROs than their White counterparts. For example, when faced with the same behavioural infractions, SROs are more likely to arrest or charge Black students. By contrast, White students are more likely to be cautioned or diverted into an informal conflict resolution or treatment programs (Goffredson et al. 2020; Homer and Fisher 2020). It is important to note that research based in the U.S. has established that Black and Hispanic youth are both overrepresented in school suspensions/expulsions as well as arrests and convictions within the criminal justice system (Merkwae 2015; Kochel, Wilson and Mastrofski 2011; Stewart, Baumer, Brunson, and Simons 2009).

- In the Canadian context, this area of SRO research is severely underexplored (Madan 2016; Ontario Association Chiefs of Police, 2020). There are some data that suggest that racial minority students, notably Black students, are more likely than White students to be subjected to harsh disciplinary practices (James and Turner, 2017). This includes suspensions, expulsions, as well as police intervention. To date, no Canadian study examines the impact of SROs on school-based arrests, charges, or other disciplinary measures.

- US research suggests youth with disabilities (those who identify as having a learning, emotional or behavioural disorder) are overrepresented in school-based arrests (Merkwae 2015 pg.149; Gottfredson et al. 2020; Hirschfield 2008; Skiba, Arredondo, Gray, and Raush 2018; U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights 2014; Welch and Payne 2018). Scholars suggest this is a result of increased police presence in schools. Thus, a number of academics, activists, and policy officials are raising concerns over the negative consequences of SRO programs on youth with disabilities (Merkwae 2015; Nance 2016; Theriot and Cuellar 2016).

- Disability advocates argue that compared to teachers, and other specialized school staff, police are undertrained with respect to the various disciplinary measures that can be used to informally deal with youth who have behavioural problems (Merkwae 2015; Nance 2016; Theriot and Cuellar 2016).

Youth-police relations – SRO program impacts

- SRO programs have been regarded by many as a valuable initiative to help students build positive relationships with school officers and also improve relations between youth and police in general.

- Once again, the research results are mixed. Some studies suggest greater interactions with SROs are related to more positive student attitudes about SROs, and thus helps to dispel misunderstandings of the police and the justice system (Curran, Fisher, Viano, and Kupchik, 2020; Theriot, 2016). Additional studies suggest however, that the views of students are complicated. Students expressed skepticism about police in general, even if they held positive perceptions of their SRO (Hopkins, Hewstone, and Hantzi, 1992; Jackson, 2002).

- For racialized students or students from a low socio-economic background, SROs pro-police messaging may result in tensions with their lived experiences and realties of over-policing in their communities.

- While there are SRO programs in most Canadian provinces, the available research is limited to jurisdictions in Ontario, Alberta, British Columbia, and Manitoba. Therefore, with respect to SRO programs, there is a glaring absence of empirical insight into the impact of SRO programs in youth and police relations, particularly with respect to the experiences and perceptions of racial and marginalized students (Salole and Abulle, 2015).

- To illustrate, in response to concerns about racial bias within the Toronto SRO program, the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) conducted their own SRO study, in 2017[1], seeking the perceptions and experiences with all current TDSB students, as well as some former students, community members and representatives from various community agencies. Key findings include a majority of students (71%) had no interaction with the SRO at their school; 41% of respondents felt that the SRO at their school was trustworthy, 53% however were unsure if they could trust their SRO or not; 57% of respondents stated that having an SRO made them feel safer at school, however 10% disagreed or strongly disagreed, and 33% were not sure; When asked whether they would like the SRO Program to continue at their school, 47% of respondents said yes, 7% said no, and 46% said they were unsure (TDSB, 2017).

- An alarming number of students also expressed that they felt uncomfortable or intimidated in the presence of their SRO. The survey data did not allow for an examination of racial, gender, socio-economic, or disability differences among the student sample, but was the first Canadian study to clearly identify and highlight negative

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[1] The full TDSB School Resource Officer Program Review can no longer be accessed online. Information about the review and main findings were gathered prior to the report being taken down from the TDSB website.

perceptions of an SRO program. As a result of these findings, the Toronto SRO program was terminated.

- More recently, as a part of the Ottawa Public District review, students were asked about their level of support for having SROs engage with relationship building with students and families. The 2021 review revealed that "a substantial percentage (67%) of current students either disagreed with the idea, weren't sure, thought it should only be done as a last resort or preferred for it to be done by non-police" (Tanner, pg. 34). Black students and students who identified as 2sLGBTQ expressed significant concerns. While positive experiences with SROs were noted, other participant accounts revealed "lasting physical and psychological harms that were distinctly linked to Indigeneity, race, class, gender, and ability" (pg.6). After the release of the evaluation, Ottawa's Public District SRO program was dismantled.

- A review in Vancouver, also conducted in 2021, suggests Black and Indigenous students express feelings of discomfort, fear, and anxiety when asked about their personal experiences with the SRO program. As one participant states, "As a black student, when the first thing I see when I walk into school in the morning is an armed police officer, it automatically gives me the message that "you aren't really welcome" (Arygle, 2021, p.26). Also following this review, SRO programs in Vancouver Public Schools and New Westminster District were dismantled.

- A study exploring how SROs promote resilience with youth who identify as 2sLGBTQ+, examines the experiences of five students from two Edmonton high schools. The researcher argues that in comparison to heterosexual and cisgender youth, sexual and gender minority youth are at a higher risk to experience bullying in school. Youth participants in the study favour SROs who promote "positive and inclusive school environments" (Pynoo, pg.80) and suggested SROs can build relationships with vulnerable students through mentorship. Thus, by intentionally making space for 2sLGBTQ+ students that are at a high risk of bullying victimization, the study's participants suggest SROs can indeed increase positive perceptions of the police among youth who traditionally report higher levels of distrust (Pynoo, 2020).

- Research from both the United States and Canada paints a rather complex picture with respect to the relationship between students and police. Limitations in study methodologies prevent casual conclusions from being drawn about SRO presence and attitudes towards the police, in general. Furthermore, when it comes to exploring the relationship between students and their own SRO officers, while many report positive feelings associated with their SRO, certain segments of the student population perceive SROs as intimidating figures who contribute to feelings of alienation and discomfort within the school setting. These accounts should not be taken lightly nor ignored in favour of majority perceptions and attitudes.

Conclusion

As highlighted in the above review, SRO programs are quite diverse in practice. Furthermore, studies looking to examine their effectiveness also vary considerably in methodological approach and rigour. This makes drawing confident conclusions about the effectiveness and influence of SROs on students and the school environment difficult.

Based on a review of the Canadian literature, or lack thereof, it is evident high-quality evaluation techniques must be employed when examining SRO programs. They must consider various contextual factors that may influence perceptions and experiences with an SRO, including race, gender, disability, and socio-economic status.

Researchers note that it is problematic for researchers to make strong claims about program effectiveness without a control group (a comparative school, without an SRO), or studies based on survey data and minimal interviews (Gottfredson et al. 2020). *Therefore, it must be made clear that the following evaluation is not intended to establish program effectiveness. Instead the following evaluation aims to explore and better understand the experiences and impact the SRO program has had on the Edmonton Catholic School Division community, including students, parents, teachers, school administration, and SROs themselves.* Through an examination of SRO incident data, comprehensive survey data, one-on-one semi-structured interviews, and focus groups with a wide range of school community members, the following examination is one of the first Canadian studies to thoroughly explore various contextual factors that may influence perceptions and experiences with an SRO. As such, the Edmonton Catholic School Division evaluation is providing a nuanced understanding into SRO programs, from a Canadian perspective.

PART B: INTERVIEWS WITH POLICE

- During February and March 2021, we conducted 20 in-depth interviews with members of the Edmonton Police Service. We conducted the great majority of these interviews with current School Resource Officers (N=17). In addition, three interviews were conducted with police leaders who had previously worked with or are actively working with the ECSD's school resource officer program. These interviews ranged from 50 to 95 minutes (mean=71 minutes). We conducted all interviews via Zoom conferencing technology. All interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed for analysis.

- During these interviews we asked respondents about a variety of issues including: a description of SRO responsibilities and duties; SRO recruitment and training; benefits and limitations of the SRO program; SRO relationships with school staff, students, and parents; and the relationship between SROs and BIPOC youth, sexual minority youth, and youth with disabilities. We also asked respondents to provide recommendations about how the ECSD's program might be improved.

- Our findings showed that police officers saw several purposes of the SRO program: a) to build relationships and rapports with students, parents/guardians and administration, b) to contribute to the education of students on current issues, such a vaping or sexual assault, c) to evaluate situations that may occur holistically, trying to create "out of the box" solutions for students who might have broken school rules or the law, and d) to provide an extra layer of safety to the school community.

- Our interviews indicate that police officers viewed relationship building as one of the main roles, and major advantages of the program. They saw several benefits in building rapport with students and teachers. They believed:

  o they could potentially change a student's or parents' perspective on the police for the positive;
  o having rapport with students allowed students to potentially open up about negative experiences at school, at home or in their social surroundings and seek help through the SRO or pick their brains for advice;
  o they had a better ability to appropriately intervene when students were breaking school rules or where otherwise in trouble with the law. Having established rapport allowed them to evaluate the situation differently and potentially find a more appropriate response than when coming into a situation as outsider.

- SROs also emphasized that they could act as a buffer between students and both the "regular" police and broader criminal justice system. By being located in the schools, they felt they were able to work with students and families in a way that regular police could not. All SROs emphasized that they would not have the time to build similarly close relationships with students and families if they worked outside of schools in the community, and would not be able to apply the same amount of time to cases they were assigned. That is, the nature of police work outside of schools implies that they typically rush from call to call and can only refer people to outside resources, where appropriate –

but do not have the time or resources to follow up with people they dealt with. In contrast, as SRO they have the capacity to build long-term relationships with students and families, working with the student or families over an extended period of time. They stressed this is particularly important when dealing with families who experience victimization or break school rules or the law, allowing them to create solutions that can more fully take the individual needs of the student (or family) into account.

SROs identified safety as another major goal of the program and they all talked about creating a safe environment for the school community at school. They took an holistic understanding of "safety" and spoke about contributing to an environment that did not tolerate bullying or victimization. Their sense of "safety" was also extended to the broader school community, and included parents and guardians who might reach out to the SRO about a particular situation because of the established rapport and their presence at the school.

- Several of our participants saw their role as educating the school administration about the effects of the criminal justice system in students. They recalled situations in which they perceived school administrators wishing that particular students should be expelled or receive a hard punishment, while the SRO preferred to come up with alternative, diversion measures to handle the situation, stressing the implications of having a student become trapped in the criminal justice system.

- SROs recounted different approaches to build rapport with students and their families, with some taking on coaching or teaching classes, while others run an afterschool program and still others are simply present at the school. Most SROs told us that they got involved in jobs such as parking control before and after school hours, or being present in the hallways during recess.

- SROs believed that many victimization experiences will go unreported if they were removed from schools.

- SROs indicated a potential weakness of the program is lack of fit and stressed that proper vetting and ensuring that the police officer is the right fit for a particular school community are important. They also stressed that mechanisms have to be put in place so that SROs who aren't the right fit can be removed quickly.

- SROs also pointed out that there is a lack of a clear job description, which results in officers fulfilling the role in different ways. Our data show this statement holds true, however, we would be hesitant to identify this as a weakness of the program. Much rather, it seems to be a strength that an SRO, in collaboration with the specific school, has the flexibility to adjust the role depending on the school community's needs.

- SROs stated that one obvious area needing improvement is information sharing about the program. They believe that EPS has not thoroughly explained the SRO program to the school communities and the general public, leaving many people unware what the purpose of the program is and how it functions. Generally speaking, our participants

believe that the program in Edmonton is superior to those in other jurisdictions, because SROs are not split between schools and can fully dedicate themselves to one school community (in the majority of cases). However, as the great majority of our participants stated, the differences between different types of SRO programs are often not known to the public.

- Related to the perceived lack of knowledge of the program, SROs also suggested to raise awareness of how to reach the SRO when needed.

- Some SROs stated the collection of systematic data is necessary to see the impact of the program on racialized students. They stressed that these data would also need to be compared to situations where racialized students are dealing with non-SRO police officers.

- SROs also stated that there should be clear communication between the school administration, the school community, and EPS what the desired outcomes are for a particular SRO position, since working conditions and ability to build rapport with students also depends on the size of the school community. Some police members recommended having two SROs in schools with a student population over 2,000 students to ensure that students and parents still reap the benefits of being able to contact the SRO whenever they need.

- Some SROs also suggested that they would like to receive additional training on life histories and trauma-informed strategies to better address the needs of vulnerable students.

PART C:
INTERVIEWS WITH PRINCIPALS AND SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

- During February and March 2021, we conducted 26 in-depth interviews with principals and vice-principals from the Edmonton Catholic School District (N=23), as well as interviews with select administrators (N=3). These interviews lasted between 65 and 89 minutes (mean=74 minutes), all interviews were held via zoom video conferences, recorded and transcribed verbatim. We coded and analyzed our data using NVivo analysis software.

- During these interviews we asked respondents about a variety of issues including: a description of SRO responsibilities and duties; SRO recruitment and training; benefits and limitations of the SRO program; SRO relationships with school staff, students, and parents; and the relationship between SROs and BIPOC youth, sexual minority youth, and youth with disabilities. We also asked respondents to provide recommendations about how the ECSD's program might be improved.

- All but one ECSD participants were in strong support of the SRO program and advocated to keep the program in the schools. The principal who was not in strong support emphasized that they had no negative experiences with the SRO program and did not believe it was causing any harm, however, they did not share their colleagues' opinions about the value of the program for schools. This participant would rather like to see the resources spend on additional counselling or social work.

- All ECSD members (but one) expressed serious concerns for students were the program to be removed. In particular, they were concerned about having to rely on "outside" Edmonton Police Service officers to come into the school and deescalate situations that require police presence, such as violent altercations on school property. In their experience, such situations are much better dealt with when officers already have established rapport with students.

- ECSD members described three general types of SROs: A) someone approaching the role from a social work perspective, building strong rapport with the school community, B) someone who chooses the role because the job is less stressful than policing roles in the streets. This "type" of officer was described as mostly spending time in their offices, and C) someone who puts emphasis on "enforcing" rules and the law. The overwhelming majority of ECSD participants stated that the SROs they had encountered throughout their careers fell into category A, with the fewest falling into category C.

- Members of the ECSD identified several roles they perceived SROs had. Many ECSD members emphasized that SROs added an extra layer of safety for the schools, with a majority stressing that they would not want to work at a school without an SRO.

- Having established relationships and rapport between students, caregivers, and the SRO was consistently stressed as a major advantage of the program. ECSD members stressed the SRO typically had a more holistic and nuanced understanding of a particular

situation, student, or family and could work towards solutions meeting the needs of the particular student or family (both in case of victimization or when the student broke the law or school rules).

- o Almost all ECSD members shared detailed examples of how the SRO de-escalated situations because they had a pre-established relationship with students and families. This allowed them to create solutions that were tailored to the needs of a particular student or family. ECSD participants stressed that "regular police officers" would not have the time to do the same.

- ECSD members also stressed that SROs were an additional resource in the school: while participants emphasized different aspects that they felt were important in that regard, they all emphasized that SROs provided their "time" and "qualifications" to the school community.

- ECSD members saw several benefits for students. Some of the recurring themes in this category relating to the perceived benefits for students were that ECSD members felt:

  - o Students could informally seek out the SROs for advice on a variety of matters, such as friends they might be concerned about or issues they are facing in their own lives;
  - o Students could seek out legal advice from SROs;
  - o SROs could be a listening ear for students who have difficult home lives or friendship circles;
  - o SROs were contributing to education by running classes and workshops on a variety of topics, such as vaping, assault, or bullying;
  - o SROs were contributing to the school community life by coaching sports teams, run bike workshops etc.;
  - o Students could establish a more positive view of policing by interacting with the SRO;
  - o Students could ask SROs critical questions about policing.

- ESCD members also saw benefit for themselves, teachers, and parents:

  - o They believed principals and administrators could get advice from SROs when having questions about how to handle a particular situation, but that the SRO also acted as someone that parents could get advice from;
  - o They felt that the SROs provided a resource for teachers by allowing them to pick their brains on various legal or crime-related questions – often also of personal nature;
  - o They stressed it was a huge advantage having the SRO to consult when students got into trouble or broke the law, instead of having to call the Edmonton Police Service who did not have pre-established relationships at the school;
  - o Numerous principals stressed that the SRO was particularly critical during the COVID-19 pandemic and was able to do home visits and check in on students and families that they had pre-existing relationships with;

- Some principals emphasized that SROs contributed to helping administration re-think a particular consequence (for example, a suspension), by advocating for mechanisms that are more informal (such as working out with the SRO for a given period of time, as opposed to charging the student);
- Principals felt it was an advantage that an SRO could use police channels to receive information about a student's or family's background to more holistically address concerns if they arise;
- Principals working in schools with many newcomer families expressed that the SRO was able to answer questions about the criminal justice system and the law, and break down barriers between police and newcomer families.

- Some principals expressed that they would never work for a school that did not have an SRO program because they would not "feel safe". This was mostly the case for principals who had worked at large schools in the city and those who were working at schools that had a disproportionate number of families be involved with the criminal justice system. Other principals, working for smaller schools or those whose school community had traditionally few encounters with the criminal justice system, stated that the SROs are not necessarily needed for school safety but as an additional resource for their student and parent body.

- ECSD members felt it would be beneficial if EPS were to allow future SROs to start their position before schools actually open in September. This would allow for an easier transition and the administration/teachers would already have time to get acquainted with a new SRO, while the SRO would have a chance to learn about the school and its community before starting their new position.

PART D:
FOCUS GROUPS WITH TEACHERS

- In May 2021, we advertised our study via "Power School", asking interested teachers directly associated with the Edmonton Catholic School District schools to participate in focus groups. Interested individuals reached out to the research team either via our study email address or via phone. We offered $15 for participation (in the form of a gift certificate).

- In total, 15 teachers participated in the focus groups. Focus groups were conducted and recorded via Zoom conferencing technology and subsequently transcribed for analysis.

- During the focus groups we asked participants about: their direct experiences with the SRO program; their general thoughts on the program's successes and shortcomings; how they believe the program may benefit teachers, students, parents and the school environment; whether or not they see the program as having negative effects on marginalized populations; and how they would like to see the program improved, if at all. We also specifically asked all our participants about whether they would like to see the ECSD's program continued.

- Teachers were largely supportive of the SRO program and expressed their wishes for the program to stay. In fact, the focus groups with teachers unanimously supported to maintain the program. That said, teachers were more critical of the program than students and parents and offered several areas of improvement.

- While the teacher participants perceived the program as a positive addition for their school communities, they were also attuned to the fact that the program had been under public criticism. In particular, some participants acknowledged that they might not be in the best position to judge the program, since their life experiences were different from that of some of their students.

- Two teachers stated that they aren't sure whether the program may disadvantage students from BIPOC communities and felt that particular attention should be paid to how they perceive the program. Even with these stated concerns, they ultimately saw more benefits than drawbacks to the program and want the program to continue.

- When asked what they perceived the main roles of the SROs to be, teachers spoke about five areas a) relationship building with students, b) relationship building with the wider school community, such as parents, c) student education on topics around law enforcement, d) ensuring school safety, and e) relieving the administration and teachers of some of the responsibilities pertaining to potential issues in the school community.

- While the participants in our focus groups spoke at length to each of these themes, the great majority highlighted relationship building as the primary goal of the SRO program. Having someone around the school that students can turn to, who is an additional familiar adult in the building who has time to listen to students' concerns is an important goal

from the perspective of teachers. Teachers saw this as not only important for school-related concerns but also for issues that students may experience outside of the school context but would still like to have advice on.

- Some teacher participants also stressed that they perceived building rapport between students/their families and an SRO could translate into positive perceptions of police in general. While criminological research has shown that trusting one police officer does not translate to a more positive perception of policing in general, many of our participants across different focus groups shared the perception that having a positive relationship to the SRO might also allow students to develop more positive perceptions of policing in general.

- A few teachers stressed that similar to any other social relationship, for example, between student and teachers - relationships between SROs and students may be positive for *some* students, but not *all*.

- Some teachers stressed the importance of relieving stress and work for the administration and teachers because the SRO can deal with issues that teachers and administration do not necessarily want to, or have the time to, deal with.

- Teachers mentioned that SROs did not only build rapport with students and teachers, but significantly contributed to fostering relationships with the wider school community, such as parents, or sometime businesses around the respective school campus.

- Teachers noted that SROs were particularly important during the COVID-19 school closures, when several SROs had taken on home visits and were able to stay in contact with students and their families. This, they stressed, was crucial for students who might experience difficult situations at home, such as family violence.

- Other participants stressed the importance of the SRO's contributions to student education and being able to educate students on legal issues, topics such vaping, or other matters relevant to the age group.

- Perhaps surprisingly, school safety was not the main point teachers brought forward. While the topic of safety was brought on by principals, teachers indicated that school safety had never really been a concern, even prior to having the SRO program. If and when school safety was discussed, it was usually referenced in the context of either working at a large school that had different safety and security needs than smaller schools or in the context of having strangers to the school community frequently enter school grounds. Other participants highlighted that having the SRO in the building might increase the sense of safety if a lockdown or an extreme event, such as an active shooter, occurred.

- Our teacher participants several ideas about how to make best use of the SRO program and how to improve it:

- They stressed having the SRO involved in all activities "around the school:" from doing parking control before and after school as a way to greet students in the morning and potentially make connections to caregivers, to being involved in recess supervision and teaching classes or coaching sports.
- More tangibly, they suggested having the SRO come along on fieldtrips, to allow students who might otherwise not interact with the SRO to build some form of rapport in an informal setting.
- Our participants spoke about the fact that parents in some schools have raised concerns about the program. They perceive these concerns to be rooted in not having had exposure to the program or not being privy to how exactly the school operates, what issues occur and so on. They suggested meeting these concerns head on, by inviting parents to meet with the SRO or observe them during school hours.
- Similar to parents potentially not having enough information about the program, some teachers also expressed that they initially had little knowledge about it. They felt more information about the program and its intent should be shared with teachers.
- They commended that many SROs are open to talk about issues in policing, which – in their view – significantly helps in building a positive relationship with students. Teachers suggested that all SROs should be open to discuss critical question about policing – something that could be determined in the interview process.
- The main concern for all teachers was the frequent turn-over, often without much notice. Teachers commented on the fact that when SROs who are determined to be a "good fit" for their school eventually leave their positions (latest after five years), they leave students who have potentially just developed positive relationships with the particular SRO in a position where they have to build relationships with a new SRO.
- Teachers agreed that one of their main concerns about the program in its current forms is the question of fit of a particular SRO for a specific school community. They advocated to establish process by which schools have more input in how particular SROs are selected and to have a period whereby the school community and SRO can get to know each other to determine fit. Our participants suggested implementing a mechanism where an SRO could be exchanged quickly, if they weren't the right fit, instead of staying at the school for the several years.
- Some teachers recommended implementing the SRO program throughout all junior high schools, with some recommending having shared SROs between different elementary schools so that younger students could have access to an SRO if needed.

PART E:
FOCUS GROUPS WITH PARENTS

- In May 2021, we advertised our study via "Power School", calling for volunteers to participate in focus groups for parents and guardians directly associated with the Edmonton Catholic School District schools. Interested individuals reached out to the research team either via our study email address or via phone. In June 2021, we initiated a second call as we were looking to ensure we include more voices of parents and guardians of students who are Black, Indigenous, People of Colour, or identify as 2SLGBTQ+. Again, we offered all our participants $15 for participation. We offered $15 for participation (in the form of a gift certificate).

- For parents we provided several options for our focus groups:

    o Parents of any student
    o Parents of Indigenous students
    o Parents of Black students
    o Parents of other students of colour
    o Parents of 2SLGTBQ+ students

- We conducted focus groups or interviews with 16 parents: ten parents of racialized students and six parents who self-identified as White. Some of these participants chose to engage in a one-on-one interview rather than participate in a focus group. We were able to generate representation from Black, Indigenous and other People of Colour, and conducted an interview with one parent whose child identifies as 2SLGBTQ+.

- We conducted all interviews and focus groups via Zoom conferencing technology. All interviews and focus groups were recorded and subsequently transcribed for analysis. All recordings were deleted following transcription.

- During interviews and focus groups we asked participants about: their direct experiences with the SRO program; their general thoughts on the program's successes and shortcomings; how they believe the program may benefit teachers, students, parents and the school environment; whether or not they see the program as having negative effects on marginalized populations; and how they would like to see the program improved, if at all. We also specifically asked all our participants about whether they would like to see the ECSD's program continued.

- Parents were largely supportive of the program and applauded ECSD for evaluating the program before making a decision about its future.

- All parents participating in the focus groups wanted the SRO program to remain in place, however, they had a variety of suggestions for improvement (see below).

- The majority of parents who signed up for focus groups or interviews have had interactions with the respective SROs at their schools, mostly because their children had frequent interactions with the SROs.

- Some parents commented that they feel safer knowing there is an SRO at their children's school. While some commented on how their own children benefited from having an SRO at school because of their particular needs (frequent drug use, inability to attend school on a regular basis, etc.), they did not know whether the SRO made the school "safer" as a whole. Parents agreed that *removing* the SRO would likely make the surrounding community less safe because students might feel less of a barrier to engage in trouble-some behavior knowing the SRO wasn't there to intervene.

- Parents talked about multiple advantages their children could get through the SRO program:

    o They believed the SRO was an additional resource for themselves and their children, both in terms of personal and legal advice, but also in terms of providing additional opportunities in education, sports, and other extracurricular activities;
    o Parents believed that building rapport with SROs was beneficial for their children and they specifically commented on their children's opportunities to have critical discussions about the state of policing with the SROs. They emphasized that every citizen will encounter police in the community eventually, so they viewed the SRO program as a way to build bridges between children and police. Several parents mentioned that *not* having SROs in schools to have critical discussions about policing will do a disservice to society;
    o Related to the above, parents commented that the program helped their children understanding the role of policing in society. Two parents mentioned that their children expressed the wish to become a police officer because they had built a positive relationship with their SRO;
    o Parents believed SROs could contribute to their children's safety and were more knowledgeable than teachers or school administrators about questions around victimization, drugs, bullying, etc.;
    o Parents who had children that had frequent interactions with the SRO because they "were in trouble" appreciated that the SRO knew the student and their situation well and commended the SROs on trying to find solutions "outside of the box", rather than "slamming the book" on their children;
    o Parents believed that having a police presence in school will prevent some students to engage in crime, but will also prevent outsiders from entering the school premises.

- One of the parents of two Indigenous students, who had asked for an individual interview, recounted his experiences with several SROs throughout the last couple of years. At several points in the interview, he attributed the fact that his children, who had experienced severe sexual victimization throughout their childhood and suffered from mental health and substance abuse issues, were still alive, thanks to the SROs working with them. He told us that one of his children was emotionally not able to attend classes

at school at this time, but that the SRO allowed the student to come in and spend time in the school building alongside the SRO for the time being. When asked why a social worker could not fulfill this role, the parent emphasized that there are no social workers or therapists who work 24/7.

- Parents stressed that SROs offered guidance that parents could not easily tap into – for example a parent whose child's psychiatrist suggested to wean the child off some of the street drugs that they had been using (meth and other harder drugs) by limiting consumption to marijuana and cigarettes at first was concerned about how to get marijuana. However, the parent received advice from the SRO how to best approach this.

- Parents made a variety of suggestions as to who would best fit the role of an SRO:

  o According to parents, an SRO should take a neutral stance and not side with the administration over the students or families;
  o Parents believed that an SRO has to be able to connect with students and be a great communicator;
  o Parents suggested the SRO should be a positive, "bright and shining" person with a good sense of humour;
  o Parents believed that the SRO should be open to discuss critical questions about policing with students;
  o Parents believed that younger SROs would fit the role best as they could better relate to students;
  o Parents strongly believed that having someone in the role who has a trauma informed approach and is open to working with students from all different backgrounds fits the role best;
  o Parents hoped the SROs have up-to date training on how to engage with students in critical situations. They emphasized that SROs needed skills to deal with students in distress who need a calming voice or influence, while also needing skills to restrain students if necessary.

- Parents had several suggestions for improvement:

  o They believed the program could be improved by having school-wide information sessions at the beginning of the school year, and potentially after the winter break, to introduce the SRO to the parent community and explain to parents what the purpose of the program is. We believe this is a particularly important suggestion as some parents who had signed up for the focus groups actually had little or no idea about the purposes of the program. They generally supported the idea of having an SRO in schools, however, they indicated that they wished they had more information about the program, its purposes, and how to best make use of the SRO;
  o Parents also suggested that EPS and ECSD need to clearly communicate to the community and public what the intention of the SRO program is and offer opportunities for questions and dialogue;

- o Parents would like to see a video about the SRO program and introducing the SRO at their specific schools on the PowerSchool website;
- o Parents suggested that SROs should take on more of a teaching role and rotate through all classrooms, having conversations with students about critical topics, such as vaping, online activities; bullying, assault etc., but also open up opportunities for students to ask the police officer questions about policing;
- o Relatedly, parents suggested that the SRO should come along on field trips and engage students in other ways, so that the whole student population could interact with the SRO and have the chance to build rapport, as opposed to only the "sports kids" (when the SRO coached a team) or those who interacted with the SRO because of an incident;
- o Some parents also suggested that the SROs should regularly visit classrooms and open up the dialogue with students about incidents with police that students might hear about through the news. This way, the SROs could engage with students who have negative perceptions and critical questions, but might not otherwise interact with the SRO;
- o Parents lamented the fact that SROs had a high turn-over rate. This was a particularly crucial point for the parents whose children had frequent interactions with their SROs and tapped into their services for social supports. They hoped that there could be a mechanism for SROs to stay longer at a particular school;
- o Parents felt that the uniform might be barrier for children to engage with the SRO. Some parents suggested the SROs should never be in uniform, others suggested the SRO should only sometimes be in uniform.

PART F:
FOCUS GROUPS WITH STUDENTS

- In May 2021, we advertised our study via "Power School", calling for volunteers to participate in focus groups for students directly associated with the ECSD schools. Interested individuals reached out to the research team either via our study email address or via phone. We offered $15 for participation (in the form of a gift certificate). For students, we provided several options for our focus groups:

    o Young men students
    o Young women students
    o All gender students
    o Indigenous students
    o Black students
    o Other students of colour
    o 2SLGBTQ+ students

- In June 2021, we initiated a second call as we were looking to ensure we include more voices of students and caregivers of students who are Black, Indigenous, People of Colour, or identify as 2SLGBTQ+. Again, we offered all our participants $15 for participation.

- In total, 30 students participated, with 25 students identifying as racialized and sixteen indicating that they had refugee status. Two students who participated in the "young women's group" did not indicate their racial background – it is possible that they were also racialized.

- We conducted all interviews and focus groups via Zoom conferencing technology. All interviews and focus groups were recorded and subsequently transcribed for analysis. During interviews and focus groups we asked participants about: their direct experiences with the SRO program; their general thoughts on the program's successes and shortcomings; how they believe the program may benefit teachers, students, parents and the school environment; whether or not they see the program as having negative effects on marginalized populations; and how they would like to see the program improved, if at all. We also specifically asked all our participants about whether they would like to see the ECSD's program continued.

- By and large, the students, across all focus groups and one on one interviews, expressed support for the SRO program and mostly articulated that they wanted the program to stay. This held true across the focus groups, independent of racial and ethnic background. In total, there were three students who expressed more critical stances towards the SRO program and were concerned that it negatively impacted students from BIPOC communities, recounting stories in which they perceived the SROs at their schools to be targeting Black or Indigenous students. The students expressing these concerns identified as White and female – their concerns were not shared in the focus groups conducted with Black and Indigenous students.

- One racialized minority student expressed that they did not fully understand the purpose of the program and felt that the program's intentions, which they interpreted as "helping students" could also be fulfilled by a teacher. They felt that the SROs were not carrying out "police duties" yet focused on social relations. They were unsure whether that is a role that needs to be fulfilled by a police officer. In their experience, however, the SROs they had encountered were nicer and more accessible than police officers outside the school, yet having dealt with SROs did not change their overall perception of the police.

- One student saw potential of the program being used to discriminate against racial minority students but had themselves not made that experience and also did not know anyone personally who did. This participant was clear that they perceived the school administration or teachers to be the ones who could be involving the SROs in perceived issues with students, as opposed to the SRO initiating investigations into students.

- Perhaps most strikingly, Black and Indigenous male students who attended focus groups did not express that SROs treated students of Black or Indigenous background any differently from other students.

- Newcomer students revealed extremely strong support for the SRO program, with students making statements such as "Kerry [anonymized name of SRO] represents love", "we love Kerry", "Kerry cares" etc. The students commented on the fact that they felt the SRO was there to help them feel safe at school and provided a good resource for them if they had any questions.

- Newcomer students also emphasized that the SRO had explained aspects of the Canadian law they were not familiar with. This, in particular, made them feel comfortable at school as school rules and Canadian law significantly differed from their home countries.

- Students expressed that they felt safer with the SRO at school, while at the same time also stating that they aren't necessarily sure whether they would feel *less* safe if the SRO was not around. This was different for newcomer students though who unanimously stated that they would feel, indeed, less safe without an SRO at the school.

- Students stressed that while they never experienced a safety threat at the school, they felt it was positive to have an SRO there to handle the situation if something were to happen. So, while students do not necessarily feel *safer* having an SRO at their school, they identified it as positive to have a professional at the school who is trained to deal with issues as they arise.

- Students agreed that having the SRO in schools was offering additional resources to students. Students mostly commented on SROs being an additional adult they could address when having issues, someone they could talk to when having legal questions or being worried about friends who might be in trouble, or simply someone to connect with. They also emphasized that SROs enriched the school community by coaching teams and running clubs.

- To fulfill the SRO role well, students emphasized that SROs needed to be able to build rapport with students from all walks of life and be able to communicate well. They clearly preferred SROs who mingled among the students, visited classrooms, and talked to students in the hallways over those who were mostly in their offices.

- Students also emphasized the importance of being open, humorous, and friendly. It was important to students that the SRO had a closer relationship to the student population than the administration or teachers. Across all focus groups, students only talked about one particular SRO that they did not like, precisely because this SRO did not connect with students.

- Students stressed that they wanted the SROs to visit classrooms, be engaged in school spirit, and "be present" beyond doing parking control.

- The newcomer students criticized that they will have to become acquainted with a new SRO when switching schools and would love to take their current SRO with them when having to transition to a new school.

- Some students expressed that they'd prefer the SRO to not be in uniform as they perceived the uniform to create a barrier between them and the SRO.

PART G: STAFF SURVEY

- A survey was administered to teachers and staff at all ECSD schools that currently have a School Resource Officer (SRO). Teachers and staff from schools without a current SRO were not included in this study.

- The survey asked staff various questions about their experiences with and perceptions of the SRO program.

- The survey was administered between October 22nd and November 9th, 2021.

- Final sample=617 respondents.

- It is estimated that there were 804 staff members eligible to participate in the survey. Thus, the response rate for the survey was 77%.

Sample Description

- Most respondents self-identified as teachers (65.7%). Other job categories include Principals (2.5%), Vice-Principals (5.3%), administrative staff (8.7%), counsellors (5.3%), educational assistants (10.6%), and custodians (1.8%).

- Two-thirds of the staff respondents (64.8%) self-identify as female. The other third (32.1%) self-identify as male. Only two respondents identify as non-binary.

- Only 2% of the staff sample are 24 years of age or younger. One-fifth (21%) are between 25 and 34 years of age, 30.4% are 35-44 years-old, 25.9% are 45-54 years of age, and 16.9% are 55 years of age or older.

- Thirteen percent of respondents have less than five years experience with the ECSD, 22.8% have five to ten years experience, 28.7% have ten to nineteen years of experience, and 25.6% have twenty years of experience or more. Respondent age and years of experience are highly correlated.

- Almost all staff respondents were born in Canada (85.4%). Only 14.1% are foreign born.

- The staff sample is not very diverse. Three-quarters of respondents (75.6%) self-identify as White. Only 7.2% identify as the member of a racial minority group. Another 7.2% did not provide information on their racial background.

- Eight out of ten staff respondents identified their religion as Catholic (80.6%).

- The staff sample is highly educated: 82.0% have a university degree. One-fifth have earned their MA.

- During the COVID-19 pandemic, 33.0% of staff respondents reported that they worked mainly in person, while 61.1% worked both in person and online. Only 3.1% reported that they mainly worked online.

Personal Safety

- Nine out of ten staff respondents (91.9%) feel either safe (44.0%) or very safe (47.9%) at their school. Only 7.8% feel "somewhat safe" and less than one percent feel "unsafe."

- Overall, staff feel less safe in the community around their school. Only 23.9% feel very safe in the community, 28.2% feel only somewhat safe, and 5.4% feel unsafe.

Exposure to Student Victimization

- Staff respondents were asked if, over the previous five years, they became aware of students who had suffered various types of victimization at school. The results reveal that staff exposure to student victimization is quite common.

- Three-quarters of staff respondents (74.6%) report that they know students who have been threatened at school over the past five years. Almost half (44.1%) know of multiple students who have experienced threats.

- Six out of ten staff (58.1%) know of students who have been physically assaulted at their school over the past five years. A quarter (26.4%) report knowledge of multiple assault incidents.

- Seven out of ten staff (69.2%) have witnessed fights at their school over the past five years. Over a third (38.4%) have witnessed multiple fights.

- Three out of every four staff (72.5%) are aware of students who have been the victim of robbery or theft at school. Almost half (45.4%) are aware of multiple property crime incidents.

- Eight out of ten staff respondents (81.9%) are aware of students who have been teased, called names, or bullied at school over the past five years. Two-thirds (63.7%) are aware of multiple bullying incidents.

- Three out of four staff respondents (71.9%) are aware of students who have been the victim of online bullying over the past five years. Over half (55.2%) are aware of multiple online bullying incidents.

- Finally, almost half of all staff respondents (44.8%) report that they know of students who have been sexually harassed or assaulted at school. One out of five (20.2%) reports knowledge of multiple sexual harassment/assault incidents.

- Staff member knowledge of student victimization may help explain their high level of support for the SRO program (discussed below).

Staff Awareness of the SRO Program

- All staff respondents were asked if they were aware that their school had a School Resource Officer (SRO). Almost all staff respondents (98.5%) report that they knew their school had an SRO.

- Staff respondents were then asked how well they were informed about the SRO program. One quarter (27.3%) of respondents indicate that they are "very well informed" about the SRO program, 40.7% indicate that they are "informed," 24.2% indicate that they are only "somewhat informed," and 7.7% indicate that they are not informed at all.

- Half of the staff respondents (51.5%) report that they would like to learn more about the SRO program. The other half (48.5%) feel that they know enough.

Interactions with School Resource Officers

- All staff respondents were asked how often, in the past five years, they had interacted with or talked to the SRO at their school.

- Only 4.0% of staff indicted that they had never interacted with an SRO.

- By contrast, 72.3% report that they have interacted with their SRO on ten or more occasions. In fact, six out of ten staff (59.9%) have interacted with their SRO on twenty or more occasions.

- Staff were also asked how often they had witnessed an SRO interacting with students.

- Three out four respondents (74.9%) indicate that they have witnessed students interacting with their SRO on twenty or more occasions, 84.4% have witnessed ten or more interactions, and 96.4% have witnessed at least one interaction between a student and an SRO.

- By contrast, only 3.6% claim that they have never witnessed an interaction between a student and an SRO.

- Staff were then asked if they had ever had a positive interaction with an SRO. Three out of four respondents (74.0%) indicate that they have had "many" positive interactions with their SRO.

- An additional 19.5% indicate that they have had "a few" positive interactions. In other words, 93.5% of staff respondents report that they have had at least one positive experience with their SRO.

- By contrast, only 64 staff respondents, or 10.3% of the sample, indicate that they have had a negative interaction with an SRO. Most of the respondents who report a negative experience also report positive experiences.

- Positive interactions, described by staff respondents, include incidents in which SROs diffused potentially violent situations, dealt with rule-breakers without student criminalization (i.e., through diversion or innovative programming), provided support to students and staff experiencing victimization or trauma, delivered lessons – on various topics -- within the classroom setting, counselled parents on the challenges faced by their children, coached sports teams or assisted with other extracurricular activities, provided mentoring to students interested in careers in law enforcement, or served as a positive role model within the school community.

- Negative interactions include the aggressive enforcement of school rules, excessive use of force, abusive language against students or faculty, inappropriate behaviour towards students or faculty, inappropriate sexual relationships with teachers on school property, and SROs who spent the day in their office, avoided contact with students, and did not properly perform their duties.

- Many of the respondents who identified negative incidents stressed that they were associated with a particular SRO who was not a good match when it came to working with youth in a school environment.

- These respondents strongly articulated that most of the SROs they have worked with are great people who did a marvelous job. They stressed that their negative experiences were with "bad apples" who needed to be quickly removed from their position before they could do more damage to students or hurt the reputation of the SRO program.

SRO Job Performance

- Staff respondents were asked whether they felt the SROs were doing a good job, an average job, or a poor job performing various duties. The results clearly indicate that most staff feel the SROs are doing a good job.

- Eight out of ten staff (78.8%) feel that the SROs are doing a good job or very good job preventing fights and other violence at school. Only 3.3% feel that they are doing a poor job.

- Eight out of ten staff (81.2%) believe the SROs are doing a good job or very good job protecting the school from outside criminals. Less than two percent think they are doing a poor job protecting the school from outsiders.

- Similarly, most respondents feel the SROs are doing a good or very good job building relationships with students (84.5%), delivering lessons in class (79.0%), mentoring students (76.1%), preventing drug and alcohol use at school (74.8%), preventing vandalism (74.4%), preventing property crime (72.1%), helping student victims of crime (72.1%), preventing bullying at school (70.0%), helping with sports and other extracurricular activities (67.1%), preventing online bullying (63.5%), preventing sexual harassment at school (62.7%), and helping staff understand youth (60.4%).

- By contrast, very few staff respondents (less than 5%) feel that the SROs are doing a poor job performing these duties.

- Almost all staff respondents (85.8%) agree that the SROs make them feel safe when they are at school. Only 3.6% disagree.

- Three out of four staff (72.4%) agree that their school would be less safe if the SRO was removed. Only 11.8% disagree.

- Two-thirds of staff respondents (65.5%) report that the SRO has increased their level of trust in the police.

- By contrast, only 6.7% of staff report that they sometimes feel intimidated by the presence of the SRO on school property.

Perceptions of SRO Bias

- As discussed in the literature review, possible police bias or discrimination is often used to justify the removal of officers from schools. Most ECSD staff believe that allegations of bias are unwarranted.

- Eight out of ten staff (84.3%) agree or strongly agree that the SROs treat all students fairly. Only 3.8% disagree with this statement.

- Very few staff respondents report that the SROs treat Indigenous students worse than White students (5.7%), Black students worse than White students (5.6%), LGBTQ+ students worse than straight students (4.1%), or male students worse than female students (5.7%).

- Only 17.4% of staff respondents agree that the SROs make some students feel like they are watched or targeted at school. Seven out of ten respondents (69.1%) disagree with this statement.

- Only 6.7% of staff respondents agree that Principals sometimes use the SROs to target students that they do not like. Three out of four staff (73.3%) disagree with this statement.

- It is important to note that, depending on the question asked, between ten and twenty percent of staff respondents report that they "do not know" whether SRO bias exists or not. Several staff commented that they would need to review the research before forming an opinion. A number argued that the ECSD and EPS need to collect the data necessary to explore issues of differential treatment.

Trust in Police

- One-third of staff respondents (31.5%) report that they trust their SROs more than they trust the regular police. An additional 59.0% report that they trust the SROs just as much as they trust the regular police.

- Only a few staff respondents (0.9%) claim that they trust the SROs less than the regular police.

- A small minority of staff respondents (1.5%) claim that they do not trust either the SROs or the regular police.

- Almost half of staff respondents (44.4%) indicate that they would rather report a victimization experience to their SRO than to the regular police. An additional 39.8% indicate that they would be just as comfortable reporting to the regular police as their SRO. Only 9.3% indicated that they would rather report a victimization experience to the regular police.

SRO Uniforms

- An important issue with respect to police in schools involves the use of uniforms and firearms. Some critics have argued that armed, uniformed police officers can be intimidating to students – especially students from communities who have had historically strained relationships with the police.

- Most staff (60.9%) believe that the SROs should be armed and in uniform when working at the school. They feel that uniforms clearly identify the SRO's as law enforcement agents, underscores their legal authority, and distinguishes them from other school staff. They also feel that armed officers are in a better position to prevent crime and respond to potential safety emergencies.

- By contrast, one in four respondents (25.0%) believe that SROs should be in uniform but not armed. These respondents believe that officers rarely – if ever – use their firearms and that unarmed officers will be less intimidating to students.

- Only a small minority of respondents believe that SROs should be armed but not in uniform (2.1%). Similarly, only 2.6% believe that SROS should be neither armed nor in uniform (2.6%).

- Approximately 10% of the respondents argued for a mixed approach. They maintain that during the day it would be best to see officers in uniform. However, during special events or extracurricular activities, students would benefit from seeing officers out of uniform. Seeing officers out of uniform, they argue, would humanize the SROs and help students see them as regular people.

Status of the SRO Program

- All staff respondents were asked whether they believe the SRO program should be retained or removed by the ECSB.

- Almost all staff respondents (93.5%) argue that the SRO program should remain within ECSD schools. Eight out of ten respondents (82.5%) believe the program should be retained without major reforms. An additional 11.0% argue that the program should be retained with improvements.

- Only 3.1% of staff respondents argue for the permanent suspension of the SRO program.

- Staff responses do not vary significantly by respondent occupation, age, gender, years of experience, education, religion, or racial background.

Recommendations

- All staff respondents were asked if they had any recommendations for improving the SRO program.

- A third of staff respondents (33.7%) call for the expansion of the SRO program. These staff members feel that some schools are in the need of two full-time SROs. Others stress that all schools – including schools in wealthy communities – require their own SRO.

- Some staff feel that the role and objectives of the SRO program, within the ECSD, need to be better communicated to staff, students, and parents. This information could be communicated through orientation sessions or written materials (i.e., pamphlets, etc.).

- Many respondents call for an improved SRO selection and training process that will ensure that School Resource Officers are able to work effectively with students and staff.

- Others called for an improved SRO evaluation or oversight process that will quickly identify and remove individual SROs who do not have the ability or motivation to work effectively within the school community. These respondents all claim to have worked with individual SROs who were not properly suited to the position.

- Several respondents argue that the SROs presence in their school needs to be increased. They recommend that the SROs become more present in the halls, deliver more lessons in class, engage more with parents and teachers, and interact with students during special events and extra-curricular activities. These respondents often note that they have worked with SROs who "hid" in their office and infrequently interacted with students.

- Some respondents noted that, while the ECSD student body is becoming increasingly diverse, most school staff and SROs are White. These respondents argue that the SRO program would benefit from having officers of Indigenous, Black, or other racial minority backgrounds.

- Several respondents argued that, once trained, SROs should commit to an individual school for a period of three to five years. They argue that this is the only way for the officer to get to know the students and broader school community.

- A few respondents noted that the departure of a popular SRO from a school can be difficult for students. They argue that students should be notified when SROs are leaving and given the chance to say good-bye and show their appreciation.

- Other staff argue that there should be a transition period between the departure of a veteran SRO and the appointment of a new SRO. During this transition period the veteran

officer should provide field training and help the new officer learn about the local school culture and student issues.

- Several staff respondents noted that the SRO program needs to be better evaluated. They called for improved, more routine data collection with respect to the documentation of SRO activities and their impact on students from different racial or social backgrounds.

PART H: PARENT SURVEY

- A survey was posted to all parents on the ECSD's PowerSchool program. The survey asked about parents' experiences with and opinions about the SRO program.

- Parents could only access the survey via the use of their own unique password. This ensured that parents could only fill out the survey once and that the survey could not be shared with people outside of the ECSD community.

- Final sample=736 respondents.

Sample Characteristics

- Half of the parents surveyed (55.2%) have only one child in the ECSD system, 33.8% have two children, and 11.0% have three or more children.

- A quarter of the parental respondents have a child in middle-school (24.4%) and 86.9% have a child in high school. One out of ten parents (11.3%) have a child in both middle-school and high-school.

- Two-thirds of the parents who responded to the survey (65.8%) self-identified as female. Only 19.0% identified as male. Another 14.5% refused to identify their gender-identity.

- Only 4.0% of the parent sample is 34 years of age or younger. A third (29.6%) are between 35 and 44 years of age, 43.1% are between 44 and 54 years, and 8.5% are 55 years of age or older. An additional 14.7% failed to disclose their age.

- Half of the parental respondents (51.9%) report that they were born in Canada. A third (33.7%) were born outside of Canada. An additional 14.4% failed to respond to the country-of-origin question.

- Six out of ten parents (58.8%) surveyed indicated that they are White or European with respect to their racial background. One out of five respondents (19.8%) identify as Filipino. Other racial groups are less represented. For example, only 5.4% of parents self-identify as Black, 4.0% identify as Hispanic, 2.1% self-identify as South Asian, and only 2.1% state that they are of Indigenous background.

- Almost all parents (88.2%) report than their children are of the same racial background as themselves.

- Approximately 10.0% of the sample report that their children share half their racial identity (i.e., their children are the product of an interracial relationship).

- Seven out of ten parental respondents (70.5%) self-identify as Catholic, 12.6% are of another Christian background, 2.0% are non-Christian (i.e., Muslim, Hindu, etc.), and 5.4% report that they do not have a religion.

- Two-thirds of the parental sample (67.7%) reports that they are currently married, 8.8% are divorced or separated, 6.4% are single, and 1.1% are widowed. An additional 15.5% or respondents failed to report their marital status.

- Only 2.9% of the sample has less than a high school education. One out of eleven respondents (8.0%) have a high school degree, 15.6% have some post-secondary education, 16.0% have a college degree, 27.0% have an undergraduate university degree, and 9.4% have a graduate or professional degree. An additional 5.8% indicate that they have an education in the trades.

School Attendance During the Covid-19 Pandemic

- A third of parental respondents (30.2%) report that, during the pandemic, their children mainly attended school in person.

- Four out of ten respondents (40.2%) report that their children attended school both online and in person.

- Only 12.1% attended school mainly online.

Child Disciplinary Issues

- Most parents report that their children have not experienced disciplinary problems at school over the past five years.

- Only 13.6% report that they have a child who has received a detention or other in-school punishment, 7.5% report that they have a child who has been suspended, and less than one percent (0.4%) report that they have a child who has been expelled.

- Based on these numbers, it is possible that the current sample under-represents parents whose children have been subject to serious school-related punishments.

Perceived Safety of Children at School

- Most parents (78.8%) feel that their children are either safe (51.1%) or very safe (27.6%) at school. An additional 18.7% feel that their children are "somewhat safe."

- By contrast, less than one percent of parents (0.8%) feel that their children are unsafe at school.

- Most parents (70.6%) also think their children are either safe (48.4%) or very safe (22.2%) in the community surrounding the school. An additional 26.2% think their children are "somewhat safe."

- Only 2.1% think their children are unsafe in the community surrounding their children's school.

Awareness of Children's Victimization Experiences

- Parental respondents were asked if they were aware of any victimization experiences that their children had experienced, at school, over the past five years.

- Over half of the parental respondents (55.3%) report that at least one of their children has been teased, called names, or bullied at school.

- Three out of ten parents (28.1%) report that their children have been the victim of cyber-bullying.

- An additional 27.8% of parents report that their children have been subjected to threats at school, 21.0% report that their children have been the victim of a property crime, 14.4% report that their children have been in a fight, and 12.2% report that their children have been physically assaulted.

- Only 6.6% of parents report that their children have been subject to sexual harassment or sexual assault at school.

- It is important to note that parental awareness of school victimization is significantly lower than the levels of victimization reported by the students themselves (see results from the student survey below). In other words, the data suggest that parents are often unaware of the victimization incidents experienced by their children.

Awareness of the School Resource Officer (SRO) Program

- All parents were asked if, at the time of the survey, they were aware that their child's school had a School Resource Officer.

- Seven out of ten respondents (70.3%) indicate that they were aware that their child's school had an SRO.

- However, one out of five parents (19.7%) did not know that their child went to a school with an SRO and an additional 9.9% were unsure.

- Only 15.9% of parents report that they are "well-informed" about the SRO program. An additional 45.6% indicate that they are only "somewhat informed."

- Importantly, 38.5% of the parent sample report that they are "not informed at all" about the SRO program at their child's school.

- Three out of four parents (73.9%) report that they would like to know more about the SRO program. Only 16.1% are satisfied with their current level of knowledge.

Contact with School Resource Officers

- Only 20.4% of parents report that they have ever met their children's SRO.

- Seven out of ten parents (69.3%) report that they have never had a conversation with an SRO.

- One out of five parents (21.7% of the sample) report having at least one conversation with an SRO (in person or over the phone). Only 14.6% have had more than one conversation.

- Parent respondents were also asked whether they knew how often their own children had interacted with or talked to an SRO over the past five years.

- A third of parents (30.4%) claim that their children have never interacted with an SRO. By contrast, 13.9% report that their children have had one or two interactions with an SRO and 19.2% report three or more interactions. Importantly, 36.4% of parents indicate that they do not know how many interactions their children have had with SROs.

- Parents were then asked whether they or their children had ever had a positive or a negative interaction with an SRO.

- Four out of ten parents (38.9%) report a positive interaction with an SRO, while only 1.6% report a negative interaction.

- Positive interactions include friendly greetings on school property, assistance with student problems or behaviour, support following a victimization experience, and positive mentoring during extracurricular activities.

- Negative experiences include the use of aggressive or abusive language, excessive discipline, and SROs ignoring or dismissing the needs of students.

- A high proportion of parents (over 40%) report that they do not know whether their children have had either a positive or negative experience with an SRO.

SRO Job Performance

- Parent respondents were asked whether they felt the SROs were doing a good job, an average job, or a poor job performing various duties. The results clearly indicate that most parents feel the SROs are doing a good job.

- Five out of ten parents (51.8%) feel that the SROs are doing a good job or very good job preventing fights and other violence at school. Only 2.8% feel that they are doing a poor job. However, an additional 39.1% of parents admit that they don't know whether the SROs are doing a good job or a poor job preventing violence in school.

- Almost six out of ten parents (56.7%) believe the SROs are doing a good job or very good job protecting the school from outside criminals. Less than two percent (1.8%) think they are doing a poor job protecting their school from outsiders. Again, over a third of respondents don't know whether the SROs are doing a good job or not.

- Similarly, a high proportion of parental respondents feel the SROs are doing a good or very good job building relationships with students (51.3%), delivering lessons in class (45.7%), mentoring students (42.6%), preventing drug and alcohol use at school (48.0%), preventing vandalism (47.5%), preventing property crime (43.3%), helping student victims of crime (43.8%), preventing bullying at school (34.7%), helping with sports and other extracurricular activities (43.6%), preventing online bullying (34.7%), preventing sexual harassment at school (39.6%) and helping staff understand youth (34.4). By contrast, very few parents (less than 5%) feel that the SROs are doing a poor job performing these duties.

- Two-thirds of parents (65.8%) agree that the SROs make them feel that their children are safe when they are at school. Only 4.2% disagree.

- Six out of ten parents (58.6%) agree that their children would be less safe if the SRO was removed from their child's school. Only 8.4% disagree. However, 33.0% of parents report that they do not know whether the removal of the SRO would compromise school safety or not.

- Four out of ten parents (42.3%) agree that the SRO program has increased their level of trust in the police. Only 4.4% disagree with this statement.

- By contrast, only 4.2% of parents report that their children sometimes feel intimidated by the presence of the SRO on school property.

- It is important to note that, regardless of the question asked, a high proportion of parents admit that they do not know whether the SRO is having a positive impact or not. This is consistent with the fact that a high proportion of parents have little knowledge about how the SRO program operates.

Perceptions of SRO Bias

- Almost half of parental respondents (44.5%) agree or strongly agree that the SROs treat all students fairly. Only 3.3% disagree with this statement. However, 45.4% of parents admit that they do not know whether all students are treated fairly or not.

- Very few parents believe that the SROs treat Indigenous students worse than White students (3.3%), Black students worse than White students (2.6%), LGBTQ+ students worse than straight students (1.6%), or male students worse than female students (2.6%).

- However, a very high proportion of parents admit that they do not know if students of different backgrounds are treated differently by the SROs.

- Only 13.7% of parental respondents agree that the SROs make some students feel like they are being watched or targeted at school. In fact, almost half (47.5%) of the parents surveyed disagree with this statement. However, an additional 38.8% of parents admit that they do not know whether students feel targeted or not.

- It is important to note that, regardless of the question asked, between thirty and fifty percent of parents report that they "do not know" whether SRO bias exists or not. Several stated that they simply do not have the necessary information to form an opinion and did not want to speak to the experiences of Indigenous, Black, or other racial minority students.

Trust in Police

- Only 8.4% of parents report that they trust the SROs more than they trust the regular police. However, an additional 64.9% of parents report that they trust the SROs just as much as they trust the regular police.

- Only a few parents (0.9%) claim that they trust the SROs less than the regular police.

- A small minority of parents (2.2%) claim that they do not trust either the SROs or the regular police.

- Three out of ten parental respondents (29.3%) indicate that they would rather their child report a victimization experience to their SRO than to the regular police. An additional 36.6% indicate that they would be just as comfortable if their child reported to the regular police as to their SRO. Only 16.9% indicate that they would rather their child report a victimization experience to the regular police.

SRO Uniforms

- A third of parents (38.3%) believe that SROs should be armed and in uniform when working at school.

- However, an equal proportion of parents (39.6%) believe that the SROs should be in uniform -- but not armed.

- Only a small minority of parental respondents believe that SROs should be armed, but not in uniform (2.1%). One out of twenty parents (6.2%) believes that SROs should be both unarmed and out of uniform.

- Approximately fourteen percent of parents support a mixed approach: sometimes officers should be in uniform, sometimes they should engage with students out of uniform.

Status of the SRO Program

- All parents were asked whether they believe the SRO program should be retained or permanently suspended by the ECSD.

- Almost all parental respondents (84.3%) argue that the SRO program should remain within ECSD schools. Two-thirds (66.7%) believe the program should be retained without major reform. An additional 17.6% argue that the program should be retained with significant improvements.

- Only 2.1% of parent respondents call for the permanent suspension of the SRO program.

- Parental responses do not vary significantly by age, gender, number of children in the ECSD system, education, marital status, or religion.

- However, parental views do vary significantly by racial background.

- Three out of four White parents (73.9%) believe that the SRO program should be retained without reform, compared only 56.2% of racial minority parents.

- By contrast, 25.6% of racial minority parents believe that the SRO program should be retained with significant improvements, compared to only 12.4% of White parents.

- Only a small proportion of both minority (1.8%) and White parents (2.2%) feel that the SRO program should be permanently suspended.

Recommendations

- All parents who participated in the survey were asked to if they had any ideas or recommendations with respect to improving the SRO program.

- A large proportion of parents maintained that there needs to be better communication between the school, the SRO, and parents. Many claimed that parents need to be better informed about the SRO program and how to use it. Some parents identified the need for more information sessions, meet and greet events, and educational materials.

- A large proportion of parents believe that each school should have an SRO and that some schools require at least two officers.

- Several parents stated that the SRO program needs to be less politically correct. They believe that the SRO program should have a renewed focus on rule enforcement and holding both students and parents accountable.

- By contrast, others felt that the SRO program requires better oversight. Improved data collection is also recommended to document SRO activities and ensure that students from all backgrounds are treated fairly.

- Several parents stated that the SRO program requires an improved vetting and training process to eliminate officers who are not able to work productively with youth.

- A number of parents noted that the officers who work within the SRO program are mostly White and do not reflect the racial diversity of the ECSD's student population. These parents recommended the appointment of Indigenous, Black, and other racialized SROs.

- A few parents recommended that the SRO program adopt a trauma-informed approach that can properly address the mental health needs of students.

PART I: STUDENT SURVEY

- A survey was posted to all students who attend an ECSD school that is participating in the SRO program. Students from schools without an SRO were not eligible to participate in this study.

- The survey was posted on the ECSD's PowerSchool program. Teachers were instructed to give students time to complete the survey during class time. Students could also complete the survey at home or during their free time.

- The survey asked about student's experiences with and opinions about the SRO program.

- Students could only access the survey via the use of their own unique password. This ensured that students could only fill out the survey once and that the survey could not be shared with people outside of the ECSD community.

- The survey was administered to students between October 22nd and November 10th, 2021.

- Final sample=5,577 respondents.

- ECSD officials indicate that there were 10,218 students enrolled in SRO schools at the time of the study. Therefore, the survey achieved a response rate of 55%. This is a relatively high response rate for a web-based survey.

Sample Description

- A quarter of the student respondents (22.9%) attended middle-school (Grades 7 and 8). The rest of the students (77.1%) attended high school (Grades 9 through 12).

- Six out of ten respondents (60.1%) are 15 years of age or younger. Four out of ten (39.9%) are 16 or older. Mean age=14.8 years.

- Half of the students self-identified as male (49.3%) and 42.6% identified as female.

- One in twenty students (6.1% of the sample) reported an alternative gender identity (i.e., trans, two-spirit, non-binary, gender fluid, gender non-conforming, or questioning).

- Three out of four students (73.3%) report that they are straight or heterosexual. However, one out of five report an alternative sexual orientation: 8.0% report that they are bi-sexual, 2.4% identify as homosexual, 2.4% as pansexual, 0.9% as Queer, and 0.2% as two-spirit. An additional 2.9% report that they are "questioning." One out of twenty student respondents (6.6%) did not disclose their sexual orientation.

- Two-thirds of the students (64.5%) report that they were born in Canada. The other third (35.5%) were born in another country.

- The sample is racially diverse. A third of students (35.1%) self-identify as White or European, 24.3% as Filipino, 12.4% as Black, 5.4% as Indigenous, 5.3% as Hispanic, 3.0% as South Asian, 2.3% as South-East Asian, 1.7% as East Asian, and 1.4% as West Asian. An additional 9.1% of the sample identify as multi-racial.

- The sample also reports multiple religious backgrounds. Six out of ten students (59.2%) identify as Catholic, 17.2% as other Christian, 1.4% as having an Indigenous spirituality, 1.3% as Muslim, 1.3% as Buddhist, 0.6% as Hindu, and 0.2% as Jewish. One out of five respondents claim that they are either an Atheist (6.2%) or have no religious affiliation (12.0%).

- Three out of four students (72.9%) report that they currently live with both parents, 15.0% live with their mom, and 3.0% live with their father. One in ten students (9.1%) report that they do not live with a parent (i.e., they live with other relatives, friends, or are in the foster-care system).

- Three out of every one hundred students (3.1%) reports that they have a physical disability and 12.1% report a learning disability.

- Overall, the research team feels that the student sample represents an accurate cross-section of students who attend the ECSD schools that are participating in the SRO program.

School Attendance During the Covid-19 Pandemic

- Students were asked how they usually attended school during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Four out of ten students (39.4%) report that they mainly attended school in person during the pandemic. Another 40.4% attended both in person and online. Only 18.8% reported that they mainly attended school online.

Student Attitudes Towards Education

- Students were first asked how much they like attending school. One in twenty respondents (6.9%) reports that they love school, 33.2% report that they mostly like school, and 36.1% state that they only sometimes like school. One out of five students (18.3%) claim that they always dislike school.

- Students were then asked to rate their academic performance. Only 8.5% of respondents report that they are an "excellent" student. However, 20.6% report that they are a "very good" student and 29.6% rank themselves as a "good" student. A third of students (32.8%) rank themselves as an "average" student. Only 4.6% report that they are a poor student.

- Students were then asked about their educational goals. Six out of ten respondents (59.5%) report that they want to achieve a university (54.8%) or community college degree (4.7%). In fact, a third (30.8%) want to earn an advanced graduate or professional degree (i.e., law school, medical school, etc.). By contrast, only 10.3% claim that they just want to graduate from high school. Less than one percent of respondents report that they plan to drop-out of high school. Finally, one in four respondents (24.4%) state that they have not yet developed their educational goals and 1.3% state that they don't care about their education.

Disciplinary Issues

- Six out of ten students (61.5%) report that, over the past five years, they have never experienced a disciplinary issue at school.

- However, 30.5% of students state that they have been given a detention or some other in-school punishment. One out of every six respondents (16.9%) indicate that they have been given an in-school punishment on more than one occasion.

- One out of eight student respondents (12.7%) report that they have been suspended from school at least once in the past five years. One out of twenty students (4.7%) have been subject to multiple suspensions.

- Only 1.1% of students report that they have been expelled from school over the past five years.

Perceptions of Personal Safety

- All student respondents were asked how safe they feel at school and in the community around their school. The results suggest that students feel somewhat safer at school than in the community.

- Two-thirds of students (64.6%) report that they feel either safe (49.6%) or very safe (15.0%) at school. An additional 26.8% feel "somewhat safe." By contrast, only 4.9% of students report that they feel unsafe on school property.

- Over half of student respondents (54.9%) also report that they feel safe (44.9%) or very safe (10.0%) in the community around their school. An additional 32.7% feel "somewhat safe." Only 5.6% report that they feel unsafe.

Victimization at School

- Student respondents were asked about their victimization experiences, at school, over the past five years.

- A third of students (32.3%) report that they have been threatened at school over the past five years, ten percent on multiple occasions.

- One out of seven students (15.2%) report that they have been physically assaulted at school over the past five years.

- One out of every four students (22.6%) indicates that they have been in a fight at school over the past five years.

- A third of students (32.8%) report that they have been the victim of robbery or theft, at school, over the past five years.

- Two-thirds of students (64.6%) report that they have been called names, teased, or otherwise bullied at school over the past five years. Over a third (38.1%) report that they have been bullied on multiple occasions.

- One out of every five students (21.5%) reports that they have been the victim of online bullying over the past five years.

- Finally, 11.9% of students report that they have been the victim of sexual harassment or assault, at school, over the past five years. The sexual victimization rate is much higher for female (17.1%) than male students (8.2%).

- Some might argue that the student victimization rate would be even higher if School Resource Officers were not present in ECSD schools. Unfortunately, we do not have the data to test that important hypothesis.

Awareness of School Resource Officers

- Almost all students (81.6%) report that, at the time of taking the survey, they were aware that their school had a School Resource Officer. However, 7.9% were unaware, and 10.5% report that they were unsure if their school had an SRO or not.

- Half of the student respondents (54.4%) report that they have attended another school that was participating in the SRO program.

- Almost half of the student respondents (47.5%) report that, over the past five years, they have never interacted with or talked to an SRO. However, 40.6% report that they have had at least one conversation with an SRO and 15.0% report multiple interactions. An additional 11.9% are unsure of how many times they have interacted with an SRO.

- A third of the student respondents (33.0%) report that they have never witnessed or observed other students interacting with an SRO. However, 67.0% have witnessed at least one conversation between a student and an SRO, and 41.5% have observed multiple student-SRO interactions.

- Almost half of the students (44.2%) report that they have had at least one positive interaction with an SRO. By contrast, only 136 of the 5,577 respondents (2.4% of the sample) report having a negative interaction.

- Positive interactions include friendly and/or informative conversations, support following victimization experiences, counselling students in crisis, mentoring during extracurricular activities, lenient or innovative punishments after rule breaking behaviour, delivering lessons on personal safety in class, and helping students feel safe in the school environment.

- Negative experiences include having concerns dismissed or downplayed by an SRO, harsh or aggressive language against students, harsh or unfair punishment, feeling intimidated or targeted by SROs, allegations that school officials use the SRO to target students that they don't like, SROs who do not interact with students, and SROs who pay too much attention to "popular" students.

SRO Job Performance

- Student respondents were asked whether they felt the SROs were doing a good job, an average job, or a poor job performing various duties. The results clearly indicate that many students feel that the SROs are doing a good job.

- Four out of ten students (43.3%) feel that the SROs are doing a good job or very good job preventing fights and other violence at school. Only 6.4% feel that they are doing a poor job. However, an additional 33.7% of students admit that they don't know whether the SROs are doing a good job or a poor job preventing violence in school.

- Over half of the student respondents (55.5%) believe the SROs are doing a good job or very good job protecting the school from outside criminals. Only 3.8% think they are

doing a poor job protecting their school from outsiders. Again, about one-third of students respondents (29.3%) don't know whether the SROs are doing a good job or not.

- Similarly, a high proportion of student respondents feel the SROs are doing a good or very good job building relationships with students (38.5%), delivering lessons in class (46.2%), mentoring students (38.2%), preventing drug and alcohol use at school (40.3%), preventing vandalism (38.8%), preventing property crime (38.5%), helping student victims of crime (37.3%), preventing bullying at school (38.7%), helping with sports and other extracurricular activities (38.5%), preventing online bullying (30.8%), preventing sexual harassment at school (39.3%) and helping staff understand youth (28.6). By contrast, very few students (less than 10%) feel that the SROs are doing a poor job performing these duties.

- Clearly, students are much more likely to report that the SROs are doing a good job than a poor job performing various duties. However, it must also be stressed that, depending on the question asked, between 30% and 50% of students report that they do not know whether the SRO is doing a good job or not.

- Two-thirds of students (67.5%) agree that the SROs make them feel safe at school. Only 4.9% disagree.

- Four out of ten students (43.2%) agree that they would feel less safe if the SRO was removed from their school. Only 17.5% disagree. However, an additional 39.3% of students report that they do not know whether the removal of the SRO would make them feel less safe or not.

- Almost half of all students (45.1%) agree that the SRO program has increased their level of trust in the police. Only 11.1% disagree with this statement.

- By contrast, only 14.7% of students report that they sometimes feel intimidated by the presence of the SRO on school property.

- It is important to note, however, that Black students (21.1%) and Indigenous students (21.7%) are slightly more likely to report that they are intimidated by the SROs than White students (15.0%) or students from other racial minority backgrounds.

- It is important to note that, regardless of the question asked, a high proportion of students, like parents, admit that they do not know whether the SRO is having a positive impact or not. This is consistent with the fact that a high proportion of students have little contact with SROs and, therefore, little knowledge about how the SRO program operates.

Perceptions of SRO Bias

- Almost two-thirds of the student respondents (60.9%) agree or strongly agree that the SROs treat all students fairly. Only 6.9% disagree with this statement. However, 33.3% of students admit that they do not know whether all students are treated fairly or not.

- Very few students believe that the SROs treat Indigenous students worse than White students (6.3%), Black students worse than White students (7.4%), or LGBTQ+ students worse than straight students (5.0%).

- While the majority of Indigenous students perceive that they are not treated differently by the SROs, Indigenous students are more likely to perceive discrimination than students from other backgrounds. For example, 12.0% of Indigenous students believe that the SROs treat Indigenous students worse than White students, compared to only 5.2% of White students.

- Similarly, while most Black students perceive that they are treated equally, Black students are also more likely to perceive SRO bias than others. For example, 17.2% of Black students believe that the SROs treat Black students worse than White students, compared to only 6.0% of White students.

- In general, students from other racialized groups are less likely to perceive SRO bias than White students.

- Only 13.0% of student respondents agree that the SROs make them feel like they are being watched or targeted at school. In fact, over half (53.3%) of the students surveyed disagree with this statement.

- However, Black students (18.9%) and Indigenous students (19.2%) are more likely to feel targeted by the SROs than White students (11.5%) or students from other racial backgrounds.

Trust in the SROs

- One fourth of students (24.1%) report that they trust the SROs more than they trust the regular police. An additional 42.9% of students report that they trust the SROs just as much as they trust the regular police.

- Only a few students (2.6%) claim that they trust the SROs less than the regular police.

- One out of every seventeen students (6.0%) claim that they do not trust either the SROs or the regular police.

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- Reported trust in the SRO varies little by race. For example, 26.8% of Black students, 23.4% of Indigenous students and 23.8% of White students report that they trust their SRO more than the regular police.

- Regardless of race, a high proportion of students report that they trust their SRO just as much as the regular police.

- However, 13.3% of Black students and 13.0% of Indigenous students report that they do not trust either their SRO or the regular police, compared to only 5.1% of White students.

- Three out of ten student respondents (30.1%) indicate that they would rather report a victimization experience to their SRO than to the regular police.

- An additional 30.7% indicate that they would feel equally comfortable reporting a victimization experience to an SRO or to the regular police.

- Only 17.2% of students indicate that they would rather report a victimization experience to the regular police.

SRO Uniforms

- Half of the student respondents (50.0%) believe that SROs should be armed and in uniform when working at school.

- However, a third of students (34.4%) believe that the SROs should be in uniform -- but not armed

- Only a small minority of student respondents believe that SROs should be armed, but not in uniform (4.1%). One out of thirty students (3.3%) believes that SROs should be both unarmed and out of uniform.

- Approximately eight percent of students support a mixed approach: sometimes officers should be in uniform, sometimes they should engage with students out of uniform.

Positive and Negative Things About the SRO Program

- All students were asked to describe both positive and negative things about the SRO program at their school.

- Many students described "feeling safe at school" as the best thing about the SRO program. Others felt that it was beneficial to have an adult in the school that they could

talk to about their problems or challenges. Others highlighted friendly conversations with their SRO, the lessons SRO's deliver in class, and the ability of SROs to resolve conflicts between students.

- Most students failed to report negative things about the SRO program. However, one in ten students highlighted that they sometimes felt targeted or intimidated by the presence of a police officer in school. A smaller number stated that they did not like having guns in the school or alleged that the SROs sometimes engaged in biased rule enforcement.

Status of the SRO Program

- All students were asked whether they believe the SRO program should be retained or permanently suspended by the ECSB.

- Eight out of ten student respondents (80.2%) report that the SRO program should remain within ECSD schools. Two out of three (68.1%) believe the program should be retained without major reforms. An additional 12.1% argue that the program should be retained with significant improvements.

- Only 1.6% of student respondents call for the permanent suspension of the SRO program.

- However, an additional 18.2% of students claim that they are "unsure" whether the SRO program should be continued or not.

- Student support for the SRO program does not vary significantly by student age, gender, or grade.

- However, student views do vary significantly by racial background.

- For example, three out of four White students (72.2%) believe that the SRO program should be retained without reform, compared 60.1% of Black students and 61.8% of Indigenous students.

- By contrast, 13.8% of Black students and 12.4% of Indigenous students believe that the SRO program should be retained with significant improvements, compared to 10.4% of White students.

- Black (22.6%) and Indigenous students (24.0%) are also more likely than White students (15.8%) to report that they are "unsure" whether the SRO program should be continued or not.

- Regardless of race, only a small proportion of students -- less than 4% across all racial groups -- feel that the SRO program should be permanently suspended.

Recommendations

- All students were asked if they had any recommendations for improving the SRO program. Many of their recommendations echo the recommendations provided by both teachers and parents.

- Many students maintain that the SROs should interact more frequently with students and the broader school community. These students argue that some SROs spend too much time in their office or talking to staff and not enough time interacting with students.

- Other students argued that SROs need to be better selected and trained to ensure that they know how to interact with youth.

- While a few students argued that the SROs need to engage in greater enforcement activity, others argued that SROs need focus less on enforcement and more on innovative strategies to deal with student conflicts.

- Several students identified the need to hire more racial minority officers so that the SRO program better reflects the ECSD's diverse student body.

- Other students argued that more needs to be done to ensure the equal treatment of students from all racial and social backgrounds.

PART J: A REVIEW OF "OFFICIAL" SRO DATA

The ECSD provided the research team with access to all recorded data on SRO-involved incidents. For purposes of this analysis, a recorded SRO incident involves an interaction between a student and an SRO that resulted in some punitive action including warnings, suspensions, expulsions, criminal charges, or alternative measures. The provided data covered an 11-year period from 2010 to 2021. SRO-involved incidents include a range of activities including wellness checks, mental health emergencies, as well as investigations into criminal offences (i.e., theft, drug possession, and violent crime). Within this eleven-year period, the ECSD reported 2,295 SRO-involved-incidents. A summary of our analysis of these data is provided below:

Student Demographics

- The data suggest that 66.8% of SRO incidents involved students identified as male. The other third involved students identified as female. Only one case involved an alternative gender identity.

- Three out of four documented SRO cases (77.2%) involved students who were either 15 (28.7%), 16 (28.4%), or 17 years of age (20.1%). Only 4.3% of incidents involved students 18 years of age or older. One out of eight incidents (12.1%) involved students 14 years of age or younger.

- Over 90% of SRO incidents involved high school students. Only 10% involved students in grades seven or eight.

Nature of SRO Involvement

- Teachers and school officials initiated almost half (44.9%) of the SRO-related incidents documented by the ECSD data.

- An additional 12.1% of cases were initiated by either a student (7.5%) or parent (4.6%).

- In other words, almost sixty percent of all SRO incidents were reactive and involved an SRO responding to a call for service from a teacher, school official, student, or parent.

- By contrast, one out five (18.9%) SRO-involved incidents were the result of proactive SRO patrols or an SRO investigation.

Type of Student Behaviour

- The research team reviewed the textual description of each documented SRO-incident and coded the type of student behaviour that had attracted SRO attention. A single

incident could involve more than one type of concerning behaviour (i.e., alcohol consumption and a fight between students).

- It is important that 17.9% of all cases had no description of student behaviour. Once again, this high level of missing data underscores the limitations of the data.

- One of four cases (24.4%) appear to involve either attendance issues (11.3%) or classroom disruption problems including student disrespect of school authorities (i.e., talking back to teachers, disobeying teacher commands, etc.).

- These types of incidents may raise concern over the use of SROs by teachers or principals. Should police officers be dealing with incidents of attendance, lateness, and poor classroom behaviour? According to the literature, incidents involving concerns over attendance and school performance may be perceived by the community as teacher efforts to download minor disciplinary infractions onto SROs.

- Three out of every ten documented SRO incidents (29.4%) involved violence or the threat of violence including: verbal threats between students (9.3%), physical fights between students (6.6%), physical assaults (3.6%), robbery/extortion (7.3%), and the possession of an illegal weapon (2.6%).

- A fifth of all incidents involved allegations of bullying (13.6%) or cyber-bullying (7.0%).

- Three percent of cases involved sexual harassment (2.0%) or sexual assault (1.0%).

- One out of twenty-five SRO-related incidents (4.1%) involved an allegation of theft or vandalism.

- Almost ten percent of cases involved drug use (5.6%), drug possession (3.4%), or alcohol consumption at school (0.5%).

- An additional 8.3% of documented SRO incidents involved allegations of vaping (5.2%) or smoking (3.1%) on school property.

Case Outcomes

- Over a quarter of SRO incidents (28.3%) ended with the student only receiving a warning or caution.

- An additional 18.3% of cases resulted in student counselling and/or informal conflict resolution.

- One out of six cases (16.3%) resulted in an out-of-school suspension.

- In-school suspensions were the identified consequence in 4.7% of all cases.

- In 2.3% of cases, students were expelled or transferred to another school.

- One out of twenty-five incidents (3.9%) resulted in the student attending an outside diversion program (1.1%), a community service program (1.8%), or an in-school detention (1.0%).

- According to the data provided by the ECSD, only 124 of the 2,295 SRO-involved incidents, documented between 2010 and 2021, resulted in a formal criminal charge against a student. This represents 5.4% of the sample.

- It should be noted that case outcome was not recorded for one out of five incidents (20.8%). In these cases, we know that there was a student-SRO engagement, but we do not know whether that engagement resulted in a punishment or not. This high level of missing data underscores the poor quality of the data collected.

- Incidents involving serious violence or criminal activity were more likely to result in charges than cases involving student rule breaking, bullying, or substance use.

- However, regardless of type of student behaviour, few incidents resulted in criminal charges. For example, charges were laid in only 5.3% of cases that involved a fight between students, 7.0% of threat incidents, 8.5% of property crimes, 13.3% of cases involving the possession of an illegal weapon, 14.5% of physical assaults, 15.2% of drug possession cases, and 16.2% of incidents involving robbery or extortion.

- This low charge rate, across cases categories, brings into the question allegations that the presence of an SRO will automatically lead to the criminalization of students.

Vaping

- Concerns about smoking cigarettes were prevalent in the SRO database from 2010-2013. However, smoking infractions were largely replaced with infractions involving e-cigarettes and vaping by 2015.

- In 2014, the first vaping violation (possession or being caught vaping on or near school property) was documented. The number of vaping incidents increased each year until 2020 – the first year of the pandemic. By 2021 vaping incidents had disappeared from the data.

- Another notable change with respect to vaping cases was a drop in punishment severity. Initial cases usually resulted in out-of-school suspensions, while cases later in the decade resulted in warnings.

The Impact of COVID

- The pandemic saw a different approach with respect to SRO-student interactions. During lockdown periods, where students were learning remotely, SRO involvement switched from a focus on deterrence and sanctions, to documented home visits alongside other school officials.

- Reasons for home visits included inquiries into student performance, low online class attendance, or failure to log onto online classes. SROs would conduct welfare checks if a student never logged onto online classes or if attempts to reach their parents were unsuccessful.

- Furthermore, during the holiday season and winter months, SROs facilitated the delivery of "hampers" (bins with food) to students who were identified as in need. SROs also assisted in the delivery of Chromebooks and wireless technologies to assist students who did not have consistent access to the Internet or computers during the online learning period.

Data Limitations

- While providing important insights into SRO-involved incidents, the data suffer significantly from reporting inconsistencies, both within and across institutions. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted with caution:

    o Within each institution, many recorded incidents were incomplete and lacked meaningful information. To illustrate, entry texts were, at times, vague and did not include important information on the nature of SRO involvement, type of offence or rule violation, or case outcome. As such entries would simply refer to a student's behaviour or indicate that an SRO was consulted.

    o One out of five entries (20.8%) did not include information on case outcome.

    o Similarly, in almost 25% of the cases, the recorded outcome did not align with outcome highlighted in the entry text data. To illustrate, there were many cases in which the consequence was described in the data field as an in-school suspension, but the entry text described the outcome as an out-of-school suspension.

    o The most common inconsistency involved incidents where a "warning" was recorded in the outcome field, but another, more serious outcome was recorded in the entry text (i.e., the student was given a bylaw ticket, charged with a crime, or given a suspension). Thus, it appears that a documented "warning" was used to capture a variety of outcomes. As such, the inconsistencies in reporting make it difficult to thoroughly understand SRO decisions.

    o Furthermore, the research team noted that the terms "detention" and "community service" were used interchangeably and often used to describe "informal

resolutions" such as cleaning the schoolyard or attending the gym sessions with the SRO.

o There are also discrepancies in how schools recorded incidents that involved multiple students. To illustrate, one school may include a separate incident report for each student involved in an incident, while other schools recorded only one incident involving multiple students. As an example, if four students were found vaping on school grounds, some schools recorded one entry under one student, and then listed all involved students within the text entry. As a result, this process of recording produced one entry with a "warning" outcome. Alternatively, another school may record four separate entries, leading to four separate SRO involved incidents, with four separate "warning" outcomes.

o This inconsistency can skew the data and lead to either the under-reporting or over-reporting of SRO-involved incidents. It is not entirely clear if the difference is related to the school or report writer, as these inconsistences also occurred within the same school.

o Furthermore, some schools may include an entry only for the perpetrating student, while other schools included separate entries for victims. For example, if a student were the victim of a physical assault, some schools would record only one entry describing the perpetrator as well as the outcome. However, other schools, at times, would include the perpetrator and their consequence *and* also record an additional entry for the victim.

o When this was noted, the researchers identified the case as a "victim consultation" as opposed to an incident that lead to an intervention (i.e. warning, suspension etc.)

o Finally, there is a lack of clarity on who in fact wrote the entry. This unfortunately impacts the ability to concretely determine who initiated SRO involvement. Through analysis, it appears the majority were written by either principals or assistant principals. However, some entries did indicate that they were written by teachers or SROs.

o During COVID lockdowns, it did appear that an increasing number of entries were written by SROs as a follow up to home visits.

o Finally, the data provided by the ECSD provide no consistent information on the racial background or personal characteristics of students involved in SRO incidents. Thus, the data are useless when it comes to examining allegations of differential treatment or racial bias.

PART K: RECOMMENDATIONS

It is clear that the ECSD – along with many other school boards – face a difficult question: Should SRO programs be terminated or allowed to continue? Evidence in support of the first option is somewhat limited. The vast majority of teachers, parents and students who participated in this study, regardless of their racial background, have a good opinion of the SRO program and want it retained. Thus, a decision to terminate the program would have to be justified by the presence of a relatively small number of community members who feel that the program criminalizes and intimidates students, is biased against minorities, and costs too much. One might argue that if even a few students and parents are uncomfortable with the presence of police in school, the SRO program should be cancelled.

By contrast, there is plenty of evidence to suggest that the SRO program is popular. Many of our respondents feel that the program prevents crime, builds relationships, and makes students feel safe at school. Few feel that the program targets students according to their social or demographic background. Furthermore, many respondents note that the elimination of the SRO program will not mean an end to the presence of police in schools. Police will still be called to schools to deal with emergencies, victimization experiences, and a variety of other social problems. Advocates argue that the current SRO program buffers or protects the school community from the harsh realities of regular, patrol-based policing. They argue that the elimination of the SRO program may make things more difficult, not easier, for students who get into trouble. That said, many of our respondents argue that the SRO program can be significantly improved. A review of some of their major recommendations is provided below.

Parent Recommendations

- Parents believed the program could be improved by having school-wide information sessions at the beginning of the school year, and potentially after the winter break, to introduce the SRO to the parent community and explain to parents what the purpose of the program is. We believe this is a particularly important suggestion as some parents who participated in the focus groups and surveys actually had little or no idea about the purposes of the program. They generally supported the idea of having an SRO in schools, however, they indicated that they wished they had more information about the program, its purposes, and how to best make use of the SRO.

- Parents also suggested that EPS and ECSD need to clearly communicate to the community and public what the intention of the SRO program is and offer opportunities for questions and dialogue.

- Parents would like to see a video about the SRO program and introducing the SRO at their specific schools on the PowerSchool website.

- Parents suggested that SROs should take on more of a teaching role and rotate through all classrooms, having conversations with students about critical topics, such as vaping, online activities, bullying, assault etc. Parents also wanted to see more opportunities for students to interact with informally with students and ask the police officer questions about policing.

- Relatedly, parents suggested that the SRO should come along on field trips and engage students in other ways, so that the whole student population could interact with the SRO and have the chance to build rapport, as opposed to only the "sports kids" (when the SRO coached a team) or those who interacted with the SRO because of an incident.

- Some parents also suggested that the SROs should regularly visit classrooms and open up the dialogue with students about incidents with police that students might hear about through the news. This way, the SROs could engage with students who have negative perceptions and critical questions but might not otherwise interact with the SRO.

- Parents lamented the fact that SROs had a high turn-over rate. This was a particularly crucial point for the parents whose children had frequent interactions with their SROs and tapped into their services for social supports. They hoped that there could be a mechanism for SROs to stay longer at a particular school.

- Parents felt that the uniform might be barrier for children to engage with the SRO. Some parents suggested the SROs should never be in uniform, other suggested the SRO should only sometimes be in uniform.

Teacher Recommendations

- They stressed having the SRO involved in all activities "around the school" – from doing parking control before and after school as a way to greet students in the morning and potentially make connections to caregivers, to being involved in recess supervision and teaching classes or coaching sports.

- More tangibly, they suggested having the SRO come along on fieldtrips, to allow students who might otherwise not interact with the SRO to build some form of rapport in an informal setting.

- Our participants spoke about the fact that parents in some schools have raised concerns about the program. They perceive these concerns to be rooted in not having had exposure to the program or not being privy to how exactly the school operates, what issues occur and so on. They suggested meeting these concerns head on, by inviting parents to meet with the SRO or observe them during school hours might.

- Similar to parents potentially not having enough information about the program, some teachers also expressed that they initially had little knowledge about it. They felt more information about the program and its intent should be shared with teachers.

- They commended that many SROs are open to talk about issues in policing, which – in their view – significantly helps in building a positive relationship with students. Teachers suggested that all SROs should be open to discuss critical question about policing – something that could be determined in the interview process.

- The main concern for all teachers is the frequent turn-over, often without much notice. Teachers commented on the fact that SROs who are determined to be a "good fit" for their school eventually leave their positions (latest after five years), leaving students who have just developed positive relationships with the particular SRO in a position where they have to build relationships with a new SRO.

- Teachers agreed that one of their main concerns about the program in its current forms is the question of fit of a particular SRO for a specific school community. They advocated to establish process by which schools have more input on how particular SROs are selected and to have a period whereby the school community and SRO can get to know each other to determine fit. Our participants suggested implementing a mechanism where an SRO could be exchanged quickly, if they weren't the right fit, instead of staying at the school for the several years.

- Some teachers recommended implementing the SRO program throughout all junior high schools, with some recommending having shared SROs between different elementary schools so that younger students could have access to an SRO if needed.

Student Recommendations

- To fulfill the SRO role well, students emphasized that SROs needed to be able to build rapport with students from all walks of life and be able to communicate well. They clearly preferred SROs who mingled among the students, visited classrooms, and talked to students in the hallways over those who were mostly in their offices or those who primarily engaged in aggressive enforcement activities.

- Students also emphasized the importance of being open, humorous, and friendly. It was important to students that the SRO had a closer relationship to the student population than the administration or teachers. Across all focus groups, students typically talked about one particular SRO that they did not like -- precisely because this SRO did not connect with students.

- Students stressed that they wanted the SROs to visit classrooms, be engaged in school spirit, and "be present" beyond doing parking control. They argued that some SROs were too involved in rule enforcement or spent too much time in their office isolating from students.

- The newcomer students criticized that they often have to become acquainted with a new SRO when switching schools and would love to take their current SRO with them when making the transition to a new school.

- Students argued that the EPS and ECSD appoint more Indigenous, Black and other racialized SROs to better reflect the diversity of the student body and better connect with minority students.

- Many students called for more oversight to ensure SROs treated all students equally.

Principal Recommendations

- ECSD members felt it would be beneficial if EPS were to allow future SROs to start their position before schools actually open in September. This would allow for an easier transition and the administration/teachers would already have time to get acquainted with a new SRO, while the SRO would have a chance to learn about the school and its community before starting their new position.

Police Recommendations

- SROs indicated a potential weakness of the program is the lack of fit between individual officers and the objectives of the program. They stressed the need for improved vetting and training to ensure that the individual officer is the right fit for a particular school community. They also stressed that mechanisms have to be put in place so that SROs who aren't the right fit can be removed quickly.

- SROs also pointed out that there is a lack of a clear job description, which results in officers fulfilling the role in very different ways. Although our data show that this statement holds true, we would be hesitant to identify this as a weakness of the program. In fact, it seems to be a strength that an SRO, in collaboration with a specific school, has the flexibility to adjust the role depending on the school community's needs.

- SROs stated that one obvious area needing improvement is information sharing about the program. They believe that EPS has not thoroughly explained the SRO program to the school communities and the general public, leaving many people unaware of the purpose of the program and how it functions. Our participants believe that the program in Edmonton is superior to those in other jurisdictions, because SROs are not split between schools. However, as the great majority of our participants stated, variations in both philosophy and practices between SRO programs, operating in different jurisdictions, are generally not known to the public.

- Related to the perceived lack of knowledge of the program, SROs also suggested to raise awareness of how to reach the SRO when needed.

- SROs also stated that there should be clear communication between the school administration, the school community, and EPS what the desired outcomes are for a particular SRO position, since working conditions and ability to build rapport with students also depends on the size of the school community. Some police members recommended having two SROs in schools with a student population over 2,000 students to ensure that students and parents still reap the benefits of being able to contact the SRO whenever they need.

- Some SROs also suggested that they would like to receive additional training on life histories and trauma-informed strategies to better address the needs of vulnerable students.

The Need for Better SRO Data

- As evaluators, we were asked to assess the quality of the "official" data collected by the EPS and ECSD with respect to documenting SRO activities. Our conclusion is that, to date, official data collection efforts have been poor.

- Data collection with respect to documenting SRO activities is inconsistent and often incomplete.

- The lack of high-quality data prevented the type of sophisticated statistical analysis that has been used in the United States to examine whether SRO programs actually reduce school-based crime or have a disproportionate impact on racialized students.

- We recommend a new data collection strategy that will document major SRO activities including arrest or charge incidents, diversion efforts, innovative disciplinary strategies, student mentoring, parental counselling, lessons delivered in class, and involvement in extracurricular activities. This data will better illustrate the breadth of activities that the SROs are involved with.

- As discussed in the literature review, there are also serious concerns about how SROs in both the United States and Canada treat racial minority students and other vulnerable populations. As such, the EPS and ECSD should collect data on the demographic characteristics of students who become formally involved in SRO-related incidents including student race, gender, age, sexual orientation, and immigration status.

- This data will help monitor SRO activities and ensure that the program does not have a disproportionate impact on racial minorities and other vulnerable students.

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