

School Practitioner Community of Practice
(A network for sharing & exchange)
October 17, 2018

Topic for Discussion

>School Resource Officers (SROs)

Links to two recent Center resources on the topic

- >Who are School Resource Officers?
- >More Police on School Campuses?

Invitation to listserv participants to share perspectives

Learning from Others

>Colleagues experiences with School Resource Officers (SROs)

Links to a few other relevant resources & other topics of concern

Note: Go to <http://smhp.psych.ucla> for links to other Center resources including

- >Upcoming initiatives, conferences & workshops
- >Calls for grant proposals, presentations, and papers
- >Training and job opportunities
- >Upcoming webcasts & other professional development opportunities

**This resource is from the
Center for MH in Schools & Student/Learning Supports, UCLA**

Given shrinking education budgets, we have been asked to increase our outreach to make our free resources more available (e.g., for planning, professional development, etc.).

So please feel free to share with anyone you think might benefit (e.g., forward our resources to individuals and share on listservs and websites).

For those who have been forwarded this and want to receive resources directly, send an email to Ltaylor@ucla.edu

For previous postings of community of practice discussions, see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/practitioner.htm>

Topic for Discussion

>School Resource Officers

From the Federal Commission on School Safety hearings on proactively protecting schools
[Excerpts from written testimony]

(1) Don Bridges, President, National Association of School Resource Officer

It is understandable that greater emphasis has been placed on safety as a result of the latest acts of violence that have occurred in schools across the country. I am here to tell you that School Resource Officers serve as the first line of defense in thousands of schools across the nation. They serve as partners of educators and are law-related instructors, teaching students the law and the importance of obeying it. We teach inside the classroom, walk the halls outside, and patrol the school grounds. Students see us as both protectors and confidantes whom they trust because we build relationships with them, day in and day out. Educators and school administrators rely on us to provide staff training, guidance on law related matters and enforcement of the law, when necessary.

SROs serve to develop positive relationships with students and the school community. These officers are the connection between the police department and the school system. The SRO is a positive role model and provides an opportunity for students to interact with a police officer in a friendly, non-threatening manner and environment. In many cases, it is the first ever interaction that kids have with police officers. We build relationships with students and through these, they help us keep the school safe by informing us of potential acts of violence before they occur. SROs deal with issues in the schoolhouse, whether they are student fights, gang activity, threats of self-harm or our worst case scenarios. ...

<https://www2.ed.gov/documents/press-releases/20180726-bridges-testimony.pdf>

(2) Don Hulin, Principal

SROs most importantly develop relationships based on trust with our students and additionally with our staff and community. Most people are naturally apprehensive of police. SROs work extremely hard to make our kids feel comfortable around police officers. They accomplish this by talking/communicating with our kids on a variety of topics. Simply just saying good morning goes a long way in relationship building with our students. Our kids view the SROs as just a person talking to them, not a cop. SROs provide advice and will personally refer kids to the appropriate counselor if needed. Kids will always remember and respect the person that took the time to help them in a school. In turn, a school culture of trust and ownership grows within our school. Building those relationships provides our school a means to constantly check the pulse of the school and community as it relates to school safety. It allows us to be proactive in the recognition of that troubled student, of the issues within a home and related safety problems in our community. ...

<https://www2.ed.gov/documents/press-releases/20180726-hulin-testimony.pdf>

Links to two recent Center resources on the topic

>Who are School Resource Officers?
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdoc/schoolpolice.pdf>

>Hot Topic: More Police on School Campuses?
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/hottopic.htm>

Learning from Others

>Colleagues experiences with School Resource Officers (SROs)

We asked a number of colleagues this question: *With the growing emphasis on school safety, it is likely that there will be many new school safety/resource officers joining school staff. What experiences or suggestions do you have about including training for them on learning supports and on joining the team of support staff at a school?*

Here is a sample of response:

(1) from a Superintendent

In our case, we have our own district police department, we like that we can direct content, district-specific professional development. For instance, in addition to safety trainings required to maintain their licenses, we have each SRO complete CPI training to insure more awareness of de-escalation techniques and strategies. Our SROs also are part of regional, state and national SRO organizations, designed specifically for those working in the school setting. We also ask that our SRO, Social Worker and Counselors stay in close communication. One challenge for our principals is to remember that the SRO does not serve as a disciplinarian, that role is solely administrative. It often seems easier to ask the SRO to step into a school discipline situation and principals need to remember that the legal restrictions of their position and policy restrictions of the administrative position are there for a reason, and should not be transferred. ...

(2) from a former Superintendent and current professional development consultant

My thoughts are based in the experience with bus drivers, custodians, and all others who work with the school to offer supports. School resource officers professional development would be focused on their role in an integrated, universal "school-wide" approach to supports- the idea that they are part of the whole in providing supports for learning. I am finding it helpful with groups like SROs to focus on these key areas in their role:

- *relationships that support the child's view of themselves (positive relationships, supportive, belief in themselves)*
- *trust in an adult or authority figure*
- *help with self-regulation (decision-making, responding to anger, etc.)*

Showing the six practice areas of a unified and comprehensive system of learning support and understanding how their role as a SRO is exhibited in not only crisis, but transitions, community collaboration, family-student interventions, and family engagement helps the SRO and the faculty to better unify the work.

(3) from a Principal

It is a needed resource in order to protect our schools but training is a necessity. My experience is resource officers become embedded in the school and are used inappropriately in terms of the reason why they are in the building. There are several factors but a universal school training program should be established in where the school resource officers receive a certificate of some sort. Most resource officers come in with little to no training so they bring with them the training they default to which is more "policing" versus a true resource officer. I would call for a school-based training (state-wide or nation wide) that incorporates learning supports within. I know that is not much but preparation and training is a must.

(4) from a former School Counselor and state department administrator

Everyone wants safe schools but too often schools jump to a quick fix that they believe will solve (or prevent) problems. SROs can be an integral part of a school safety plan but are not "the answer" to keeping a school safe.... Every situation and every school is different. Having an SRO is appropriate and effective for some schools while not as effective for others. The school needs to know why they need an SRO and what the SRO will do to complement existing safe school efforts. A district must begin by asking, "What are we already doing to keep our school safe? Is it working? How do we know?" If there are no data to show a safe or unsafe environment, how will adding an SRO help? What do we expect of that person?

In the written testimony, the Director of the National Association of SROs notes the 3 functions of a school resource officer: 1) Law Enforcement, 2) Teacher/Guest Speaker, and 3) Informal Counselor or Mentor. And these three functions should be based upon the set of standards/best practices that were just issued by the NASRO Board of Directors. If these 3 functions are needed by school, perhaps an SRO would be a good choice. However, hiring an SRO under the assumption that this person will make the school safe is not logical. This officer can only be effective if s/he is part of a larger effort to provide a safe learning environment. And, this officer needs to be a part of the group that works on planning/improvement efforts related to school safety. (Learning Supports work group on safety - "Crisis Assistance & Prevention")

The NASRO Director also spoke about the need for selecting the right type of person to serve the school and providing that officer with training. I would recommend that schools understand their role in this training and ensure that officers know how they fit into overall safe school efforts, discuss how they will deal with students with disabilities, provide information on students with special needs and discuss students with high risk for behavioral problems. As a school leader, I would also share expectations of this officer with teaching staff so they clearly understand roles, responsibilities and know what is expected of them by the SRO.

(5) from a School Psychologist

The SROs in our district serve the high schools and, to a lesser extent, the middle schools. The deputies serve the elementary schools through dispatch only. We see them only when there is an issue. This is unfortunate because the officer remains in the role of an enforcer and I should like to see them spending time on site building positive relationships with students. Don Bridge's testimony (I followed the link) rings true as to the type of service beneficial for systemic change. I wish that resources were allocated at the elementary level....The DARE program was funded at a middle school I worked in. This program worked very well to boost the self-esteem and pro-social behavior of many, many students.. it is a drug awareness and resistance program. While it is said to be ineffective, I would offer that while it may not have been effective in meeting it's goals of reducing drug use, it made a big difference for the students. Also, longitudinal lifelong studies need be conducted to rule out a sleeper effect as the young person matures....

(6) from a School Psychologist and educational consultant

The SROs should be part of school staff training particularly in understanding school's vision, policies and practices. In Cleveland we included them in SEL and Humanware as we did all school staff to involve them in awareness of practices teachers were teaching. Prevention focus was consistent with school goals. We wanted to make sure they were part of the school climate team. We did not include them in student support teams. We emphasized that they were valued in sharing concerns they had concerning individual students including early warning signs and possible need for further intervention by counselors. Their training included de escalation training and modeling respectful behavior. We also felt it was important for SROs to see their role as part of the schools cadre of caring adults. Knowing what to do when as a team player may be a new skill for some. Teaming could include easy ways to refer information to administration and mental health support staff. Understanding and respecting confidentiality was also part of that training. Defining role and responsibility in MOUs is also important? SROs are not counselors. SROS may need to understand the various roles of MH staff particularly as that role addresses MH promotion and school climate. School staff and community needs to know SROs roles. It would be expected that SROs would be supported to play a role in School Safety practices and possibly in threat assessments.

(7) From a School Psychologist

It's important to try to prevent as many negative side effects as possible. Some of these we think we can predict. Other negative side effects will surprise us. It's going to be VERY difficult to plan out everything in advance. We cannot anticipate all that well. So, I recommend going into this project understanding there will be mid-course corrections as we learn more and more about how to keep our students safe at school.

> *Involve All Stakeholders In The Planning*

Mo Canady's testimony for the National Association of School Resource Officers mentions the importance of a clear Memorandum of Understanding between the law enforcement agency and the school district so that both sides have "a clear and properly enforced understanding of his or her role in the school environment." Logically, this makes good sense. However, I believe the primary stakeholders in public schooling--namely the parents and the teachers--need to be included in this discussion. Since the MOU above was described as being between two agencies--the police and the school district--I'm concerned that the importance of this involvement has already been overlooked!

As a School Psychologist I experienced first hand how confused people could be about my role and function. Some educators told me that my job was to support them in whatever they

wanted. Others told me I can only see students who have or may potentially have an Individual Educational Plan (IEP). Some counselors told me I couldn't do any counseling because that was their job; other counselors told me my job was to "collaborate" with them by taking over some of their more menial assigned tasks. One Principal told me his staff already knew everything they needed to know and that if I talked to them it would only cause confusion--so I was forbidden to talk to staff about students. Parents were also confused, but many were willing to meet me to see if I had anything to offer. Some said they "already knew what I was going to say" and then refused permission for my involvement. It's logical to intend to meet at a high level to write a MOU regarding clear roles and supervision methods and then pass that down the chain of command for all to follow. But it misses the facts on the ground. Teaching and parenting are highly personal endeavors; people can take offense at being left out of the planning or at the very least, not being well heard.

Lots of people know the "one right way" to do things and will be upset if the MOU does not align with that. Bureaucracies, such as school districts and police departments, can be prone to "turf battles" and cronyism. Not involving these people in the MOU can quickly lead to a failure to implement with fidelity...

>Listen to the Stakeholders

The planners need to actually listen during these pre-planning discussions. I've been to plenty of school meetings where the Faculty was asked to provide "input" to some upcoming program. Hours would be spent in exercises gathering the opinions of the staff but, when the program launched, not one of those recommendations were a part of the plan. This sort of thing that will kill enthusiastic participation.

>Carefully Work Out the Details of Confidentiality and Leadership

Educational systems and public safety agencies have policies and procedures about how they handle confidential information about people. Some of these rules will be required by Federal and State laws, and some of these rules will be unique local adaptations. My basic understanding of confidentiality is the "need to know" rule of thumb. If you know a student could be easily stimulated to blow up, shouldn't you alert others who may come in contact with that student? Different agencies will have different opinions about this. Particularly during periods of high danger, such as an active shooter situation, school personnel and school resource officers will need to know exactly what kinds of information can be shared, who can do what, and how the chain of command works. This should be developed together, by stakeholders.

>Consider Developmental Levels Relative to Exposure to Security Equipment & Procedures

Having an armed police force on campus and conducting various types of drills will trigger insecurities in some students, school staff, and parents. Please consider the developmental levels of the student body, and their previous exposure to stressful events. Work to find ways to minimize accidentally emotionally injuring the very people we are intending to protect. Don't just assume no one was harmed during a drill; conduct a thorough evaluation afterwards to determine what actually did occur.

>Re-write the School-Wide Positive Behavior and Academic Support Plans to Incorporate School Resource Officers

Many schools have school-wide plans that teach and encourage positive behavior and support academic learning. These programs often have specific methods adults use to respond to poor behavioral choices and to encourage baby steps in the direction of instructional progress. School Resource Officers will need to know the theory behind these plans and how those principles are operationalized in the classrooms and school grounds. In this way, SROs can participate in a way that is consistent with what the school employees are already doing.

>Include School Resource Officers in School Social Activities

In the schools where I worked, the school schedule and the police department schedules often did not match up very well. This made it (mostly) impossible for School Resource Officers to eat lunch with school staff, attend evening school activities run by school staff, or weekend get-togethers. These social situations can do much to help the SRO feel like a real member of the "team" and less like an outsider who is occasionally assigned to spend some time at the school. I suggest intentionally planning and scheduling to allow these team-building activities to occur. Schools are very complex social organizations. If central office administrators and the local police force think of ways to "harden the target", passing those ideas down to those who will implement

the directives, I fear our planning will fail to consider the various levels of the larger social ecology. Then there will be large, unseen potholes in the road ahead. We can learn to see these barriers by involving and listening to the members of our community who travel that road all the time.”

Invitation to listserv participants to share perspectives

Let us hear whatever you want to share about the above or other related matters!!

Send your responses to Ltaylor@ucla.edu

Links to a few other relevant resources & other topics of concern

- >Functional profiles of school refusal behavior and their relationship with depression, anxiety, and stress <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0165178118311703>
- >Trauma-informed schools: Child disaster exposure, community violence and somatic symptoms <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0165032718302684>
- >Changes in depression and positive mental health among youth in a healthy relationships program <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0829573518777154>
- >Engaging the underserved https://www.ucdmc.ucdavis.edu/crhd/Pdfs/Engaging_the_Underserved.pdf
- >Recent books from our Center:
 - >>Improving school improvement
 - >>Addressing barriers to learning: In the classroom and schoolwide
(To ensure free and immediate access, these two books can be downloaded from our Center’s website can be readily accessed at:
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving_school_improvement.html
 - >>a third book – *Transforming student and learning supports: Developing a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system* – has been published by Cognella
<https://titles.cognella.com/transforming-student-and-learning-supports-9781516512782.html>



For information about the

National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports
go to <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newinitiative.html>

Equity of opportunity is fundamental to enabling civil rights; transforming student and learning supports is fundamental to enabling equity of opportunity, promoting whole child development, and enhancing school climate.

THE MORE FOLKS SHARE, THE MORE USEFUL AND INTERESTING THIS RESOURCE BECOMES!
For new sign-ups – email Ltaylor@ucla.edu
Also send resources ideas, requests, comments, and experiences for sharing.
We post a broad range of issues and responses to the *Net Exchange* on our website at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newnetexchange.htm> and on *Facebook* (access from the Center’s home page <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/>)