



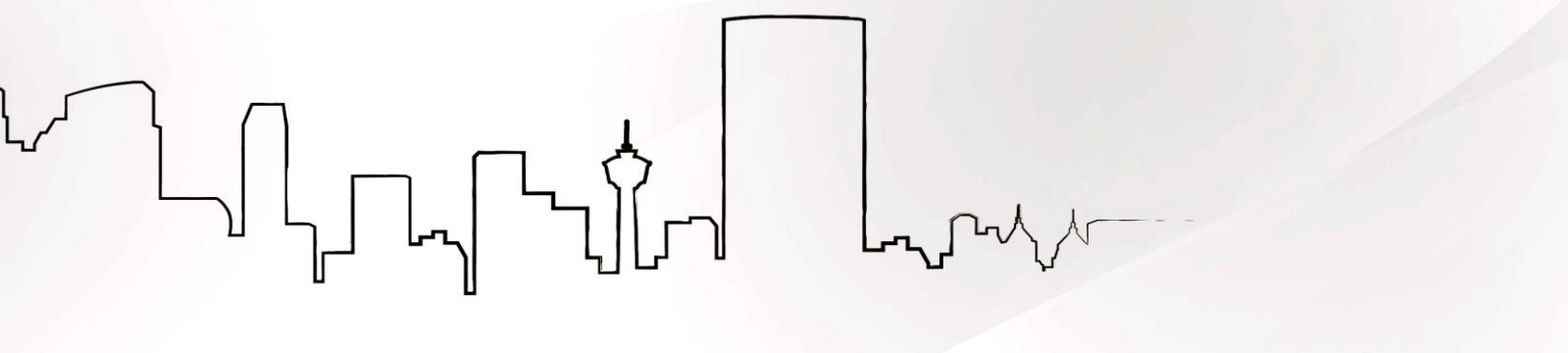
Police Engaging Youth in Schools: Reimagining the School Resource Officer Program at Calgary Police Service

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Context: How We Got Here

This review was initiated in 2020, when Calgary Police Service (CPS) Chief Mark Neufeld and the Executive Team made a commitment to addressing systemic racism in a Notice of Motion to Calgary City Council. As part of this promise to undertake transformational culture change at CPS, it was agreed that an independent, external review be commissioned of the School Resource Officer (SRO) Program to re-imagine and transform police engagement in schools so that all students feel safe and treated equally. As such, Argyle was hired in 2021 to engage students, parents, teachers, and SROs. This report faced some criticism for a lack of face-to-face student engagement and a plan was developed for re-engagement with students and the community, with a focus on the perceptions and experiences of equity-deserving groups. A project team was formed, and further external-led engagement opportunities were created, resulting in the following four reports in 2022-2023 (see Appendix A for report summaries and methodologies):

- Engage (City of Calgary) – Elementary Students
- ActionDignity – Junior and Senior High School Students
- Engage – Teachers, Administrators and Support Staff
- Engage – Roundtable Sessions (parents, students, teachers, support staff, administrators, school board representatives)

This work represents two and a half years of engagement with 2,898 participants from the school community captured in five reports. It includes work from Argyle, ActionDignity and the Engage Resource Unit (City of Calgary). Our recommendations were developed by synthesizing the findings and recommendations across the five reports produced, as well as by examining current research with a focus on the Canadian landscape (see Appendix B). Broad themes exist across all five contributing reports. This reinforces that what we have heard is accurate. This has allowed us to organize our recommendations into seven major thematic categories: Resources; Hiring and Job Requirements; Role; Training; Communication; Community Collaboration; and Continuous Improvement.

Clarification of “SRO” and “PEYS” terms:

The School Resource Officer (SRO) Program refers to the program that is currently in place. Officers spend time in schools in capacities ranging from relationship building to education, mentorship, lockdown drills and enforcement if necessary. The SRO Program has been operating in Calgary since 1976 and currently serves over 400 schools across four school divisions.

Police Engaging Youth in Schools (PEYS) is the project established to deliver on the promise of a review of the SRO program. PEYS has undertaken multiple rounds of engagement with students, parents, and teachers over the past two and a half years. Recommendations will be used to develop a community-driven, reimagined program for how police engage with youth in schools.

Key Findings:

- There are not enough officers to reach all students. Building positive relationships requires more time/officer capacity. The program is not adequately resourced.
- Some Racialized, Indigenous, 2SLGBTQI+ and students living with disabilities have had negative experiences in schools with police officers.
- Some elementary students are fearful of lockdowns and police officers. We are not setting them up with an appropriate level of comfort prior to junior high/high school.
- Negative perceptions of police mostly emanate from outside of the school environment.
- There is general positive support for the program, including from Racialized, 2SLGBTQI+ and students living with disabilities and their parents.
- SRO mandate, outcomes and roles are not well defined or understood.
- SRO work schedules are rigid which impacts their ability to attend school cultural and sporting events outside of standard business hours.
- There are training gaps around Anti-racism/EDI content and more could be done to ensure that soft skills like empathy are required to do the role.
- There is little transparency and unclear or non-existent feedback loops for continuous program improvement.
- Communication is lacking in all areas, especially between SROs, students, and parents.
- There is a need for improved data collection, monitoring and reporting to understand whether the program is achieving its desired outcomes.

Next Steps – How do we reimagine the SRO Program?

- Review recommendations with CPS ELT/SLT in detail and obtain consensus on whether recommendations will be accepted, accepted in principle or not accepted.
- Ask ELT/SLT to set up a new project to plan, prioritize, and implement the accepted and accepted in principle recommendations. This new project team should be provided with people resources, a budget, and adequate time to complete the work.
- Work with PAMRU to develop a communication plan including providing ongoing public updates on the CPS SRO website.

Recommendations:

Resources:

Shorter-term:

1. Consider assigning a 'partner-SRO' who works in a neighbouring area. This can help new SROs with coaching/mentoring, but can also allow for idea-sharing, and coverage as needed.
2. Explore in-house supports for SROs, especially in the short-term while longer-term planning is in progress. CPS has excellent expertise available from the Anti-Racism team and Office of Inclusion, Diversity Unit, the Learning Development Unit, the District Community Resource Officers, etc.

Medium to Longer-term:

3. Evaluate SRO budget to develop a plan to grow the program to appropriately staff Calgary schools. It has been strongly stated in several engagements, that the SRO program and the continued opportunities for students to have positive interaction with police is important. Rely on expertise of analysts, strategists, and SRO program team to understand workload in its current state as well as the desired future state and make a plan that can be brought forward to Commission to support with budget asks for growth.
4. When looking at workload, understand that some schools may have higher/more frequent needs, but that building relationships with all schools is important. Ensure communication of how resources are allocated, short and long-term is done.
5. Ensure supports are built into future resourcing such as a civilian coordinator who could assist the SROs with the coordination of programming, events, training, and other administrative duties including data collection.
6. Explore other funding models and whether cultural groups and/or social/health agencies can lend support, for example, in the education function. Explore ways to allocate resources to non-profit equity seeking organizations to do work on raising awareness/skills on public safety at the community level.
7. Start early. While the role may look different at the elementary level, there is a need to begin relationship development at an earlier age so that students grow comfortable as they progress through school. Positive impacts early on will be seen in junior high and high school years.
8. Explore alternative supports for SROs that include social workers, psychologists, community organizations. Research collaborative models that have shown success, such as wellness centre models used in some Calgary high schools.

Hiring and Job Requirements:

Shorter-term:

9. Review SRO hiring and position profile using an anti-racism and EDI lens.
10. Encourage candidates to apply who are representative of Calgary's population (i.e., ethnicity/race, gender, 2SLGBTQI+, etc.). Ensure a clear statement on the importance of diverse candidates is part of the position profile and is supported/communicated at the leadership level.

11. Ensure prospective SROs are vetted appropriately through the Professional Standards Section when hiring. Consider aligning this process to anti-racism outcomes.
12. Ensure the main quality required of a candidate is experience with youth, a willingness and passion to work with young people, and an ability to be student-centred.
13. Explore whether SROs can attend in plain clothes on occasion, so that they are sometimes seen out of uniform.
14. Explore flexibility in SRO work hours so that the workday can be adjusted to allow them to attend events outside of normal hours such as sports, rallies, concerts, celebrations, etc.

Medium to Longer-term:

15. Consider adjusting CPS policy to include statements on diversity in hiring. Examine what supports are provided to diverse applicants/employees.
16. Consider allowing a school or community representative such as a principal, teacher, or parent to be part of the interview process. While they may not have formal decision-making power, empower them so that their input carries weight on the decision-making team and value the insight that can be brought regarding the role, collaboration, communication and dealing with youth. This person could be drawn from the SRO advisory committee.

Role:

Shorter to Medium-term:

17. Work with SRO program staff and the school community to document mandate, role, and outcomes. Ensure communication of mandate, role, and outcomes to the community, including internally at CPS. Ensure defined roles are linked to hiring and training.
18. Emphasize relationship building and education over enforcement.
19. When enforcement is necessary, emphasize the role SROs can play in diversion and restorative justice. Ensure SROs have a consistent understanding of local diversion and restorative justice models and their definitions.
20. Do not expect the SRO to fill all roles – many, such as mental health supports – should be best directed to professionals in these areas. Emphasize the SRO's role as a connector to appropriate services or resources such as counselling or mental health supports, the justice sector, health sector, and social service providers. That said, students value receiving advice, guidance, support, and education from their SROs – the emphasis should be on active and positive engagement.
21. Clarify and document roles and responsibilities, including supervisors, SROs, and school staff. Include authorities and decision-making.
22. Approach drills through a trauma-informed lens. Consider reducing the number of lockdown drills at the elementary level. Work with schools to improve education with elementary students, parents, and teachers about lockdown drills and what is the police role during them.
23. Elementary roles should focus on fun and learning that emphasizes prevention, while focus in higher grades may include enforcement/issue management. Engagement and relationship building should remain the major focus for the SRO role at all levels.

24. Work with supervisors to ensure prioritization of programming when there are not enough resources to ensure consistent service delivery as much as possible.

Medium to Longer-term:

25. Work with Learning and Development Unit, the community, and YouthLink to develop educational programming that can be presented to schools by SROs, for which police are the subject matter experts. Ensure this programming is age-appropriate, culturally relevant, and reviewed with an anti-racism and EDI lens.

Training:

Shorter-term:

26. Formalize a crossover period where new SROs can job shadow existing SROs to create a smoother transition. Existing SROs can make introductions to school staff and students, and give insight into key events, programming, school needs, and goals.

Medium to Longer-term:

27. All CPS staff should receive mandated training in anti-racism, as well as EDI. This will ensure that all staff can work towards equity-seeking goals, and that staff new to roles in anti-racism work, as well as those dealing with Racialized communities will start from a place of understanding at least basic concepts. It will also ensure that the burden of educating and creating in these spaces is not unduly laid on Racialized colleagues.
 - a. Anti-racism and EDI training should be part of a continuous learning plan for staff and should include clear feedback on how and where the knowledge and skills have been applied.
28. Engage the Learning and Development Unit (LDU) to review the SRO-100 Handbook to develop a more fulsome, practical training plan for SROs that includes onboarding as well as ongoing professional development expectations and establishing core competencies.
 - a. Onboarding training for SROs should include enhanced anti-racism, EDI, early childhood education core concepts, working with youth, mental health, and trauma-informed care including specific training on racial trauma and trauma specific to refugees. There should be focus on working with Indigenous and Black youth.
 - b. Work with community groups and organizations to source relevant cultural and mental health training for ongoing development.
 - c. Use expertise of existing SROs to include scenario-based training related to proactive conflict resolution and relationship building with students.
 - d. Engage the school boards to see if there is training that could be shared between school staff and SROs to encourage positive relationship building.
 - e. Consider training on media/social media and technology as it relates to communication with the school community.
 - f. Ensure SROs understand their mandate, role, and the expected outcomes of the program.
 - g. Ensure entire training program is reviewed using an anti-racism and EDI lens.

- h. Communicate SRO training in a way that school staff, parents and students are aware of what competencies the SROs have.
- i. Work with LDU to develop an appropriate review schedule to ensure SRO training remains current and relevant based on both local needs and best practice. Allow SROs to give regular feedback and make recommendations regarding training.

Communication:

Shorter to Medium-term:

- 29. Develop an agreement such as a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the CPS and the school boards that clearly communicates the program mandate, desired outcomes, and responsibilities of each participating organization, ensuring consistency in understanding between boards and CPS. Include an understanding of how resources are allocated.
- 30. Leverage technology to facilitate communication between the program team at CPS and the school community as well as the community at large. Develop a public facing website/hub that can:
 - a. Allow people to see which SRO is assigned to their school.
 - b. Consider providing short biographies of the SROs, showing pictures of them in/out of uniform, and humanizing them by listing other interests, hobbies, etc. Allow students to get to know their SRO as a community member. Allow SROs to create bios based on their comfort level, understanding some may be more comfortable than others sharing personal information.
 - c. Clearly lay out the mandate, goals, and outcomes of the program, as well as the role of the SROs.
 - d. Provide positive news stories and announcements or promote events SROs will be attending.
 - e. Report back on changes to the program based on feedback.
 - f. Connect community members with who to contact if they have issues, concerns, or feedback, as well as if they have compliments or kudos for their SRO.
 - g. Post SRO schedules, so students can know when their SRO will be at their school. This can facilitate engagement and decrease surprise. Note that a degree of schedule flexibility will be required given the nature of the job, and allowing for leave time, etc.
- 31. Explore other communication and feedback opportunities such as social media, business cards with QR codes, suggestion box, etc. to reach students and the greater school community.
- 32. Clarify to parents when/if they will be contacted by SROs if there is an interaction with their child.
- 33. Work with school boards and school administrators to better communicate with parents about lockdowns and the police role in them.
- 34. SRO and school principals to work together at the beginning of the school year to plan for effective communication and issue management based on the needs of the school and the SRO. This can be followed by regular check-in meetings.
- 35. SROs should attend high school principals' monthly meetings.

36. Establish a communication plan internally at CPS to provide regular updates to patrol and other staff.

Community Collaboration:

Shorter-term:

37. Explore whether SROs can collaborate with other CPS programs such as YARD if there is an opportunity to work together or deconflict.

Medium to Longer-term:

38. Work with community organizations that focus on newcomers to help them understand the role of the SRO program in schools. Where possible, have SROs attend programming to help families be comfortable with police in school as early as possible to avoid surprise or traumatization.
39. Develop a database of community resources to be shared with all SROs. Make this a living document and allow SROs to update as required.
40. As much as possible, leverage community partnerships for help with ongoing training opportunities as well as help to create programming for students.

Continuous Improvement:

Shorter-term:

41. Acknowledge and address historical harms caused by discrimination against Racialized communities as well as Indigenous and 2SLGBTQI+ communities. Commit to continuous improvement based on lived experience, academic research, and best practice, especially around research investigating how racialized families/students are impacted and how programs can be adjusted using an anti-racism and EDI lens. Acknowledge the existence of genuine student discomfort and fear around police. To help resolve negative perceptions, officers must demonstrate 'goodness,' be role models for students, and be true to the professed role in protecting, such that trust in police increases. Address with tangible actions that can be communicated.
42. Ensure the program goals are aligned with broader anti-racism strategies that exist for CPS, the City of Calgary, and the school boards.

Medium to Longer-term

43. Consider forming an advisory group/committee consisting of students, parents, teachers, school administrators, school board representatives and CPS, which may include members of the SRO program, Anti-Racism team and Office of Respect & Inclusion. The advisory group can help implement changes to the program within schools and community, explore training/development opportunities within the community, give feedback, and encourage transparency and accountability.
 - a. Ensure advisory group/committee is effective by developing a plan including a terms of reference that outlines roles, actions, reporting and outcomes.
44. Work with analytical support to develop better data collection that includes data on workload activities, demographics of interactions, outcomes of interactions, etc. to allow for meaningful evaluation.

45. Develop an annual evaluation framework to assess how well the SROs are achieving the program goals. Include a mechanism for school feedback that can include an option for providing anonymous feedback. Consider using an evaluation specialist who is trained in Anti-racism and EDI. Ensure that mechanisms for providing feedback are accessible to all students (consider students with disabilities) and are easy to use. Ensure changes and/or feedback can be implemented and communicated in the following school year.
46. Commit to ongoing data sharing with school boards, schools, and police that balances privacy of individuals with the ability to better measure progress toward program outcomes.

Reflections on the PEYS project

What Worked Well

- We enlisted the support of the Engage Resource Unit: They provided unwavering support initially as advisors (Argyle report) and then in engagement, data processing, analysis and report writing (Elementary, Teacher and Roundtable reports).
- We enlisted the services of ActionDignity with their large-scale community connections via community brokers (Junior and Senior High report).
- We enlisted the services of Anne Sureshkumar as the roundtable facilitator. Anne's experience and expertise in racial trauma provided a lens for our work and support to participants if needed. She hired a diverse team of young facilitators to lead the roundtable discussions which worked out well.
- Our project team included the Office of Respect and Inclusion in an advisory role throughout the entire project.

Challenges

- Initial engagement took place during the Covid-19 pandemic, and we had trouble recruiting student participation outside of the online survey.
- During the re-engagement work we tried to get into schools with little success.
- Team members did not receive anti-racism and EDI training before working on the project.

Lessons Learned

- We should have had closer ties with the CPS Anti-racism Team throughout the project instead of at the end of the project.
- Time constraints led to some work feeling rushed. Note that some contributing reports only exist in draft form at this point.
- There were multiple unexpected re-engagement costs.
- Teacher engagement potentially should have been limited to the communities we were focused on reaching (those who identify as Racialized, 2SLGBTQI+ and/or living with a visible or non-visible disability). Despite this being open to all principals, teachers, and support staff, we found that broad themes matched those found in the other four contributing reports. Also, more collaborative work can be done with teachers/school staff to acknowledge and address racial trauma, especially as it relates to students, their families, and police.

- In the roundtable sessions, some students and parents were overwhelmed by the number of teachers and principals and school boards representatives in the room. Remaining in peer groups instead of mixing peer groups may have resulted in different/additional findings.
- Roundtable Indigenous participation was small and more should have been done to encourage participation, even if it means disruption to tight project deadlines.

Appendix A: Methods and Findings from Contributing Reports

Each of the five contributing reports is summarized below. Details include:

- Report title
- The organization that authored the report
- Participant types and numbers
- Methodology
- Framework
- Key findings

School Resource Officer (SRO) Program Evaluation: Final Report for the Calgary Police Service (CPS)

Agency: Argyle

Timeframe: January 2021 - August 2021

Participant types and numbers:

- Students: 253 (0 in-person, 253 online, including 16 virtual face-to face conversations)
- Teachers and support staff, parents: 1,579
- SROs and CPS staff: 72
- **Total: 1,904**

Methodology

Target audiences:

- Students, parents/guardians, CPS staff, SROs, school staff, community members with knowledge of and/or experience with the program

Data collection tools:

- Surveys: Online surveys were used for all school community participant groups
- Interviews: In-person interviews were held with SROs
- Workshops/webinars: Online focus groups were used to speak face-to face with students, parents, and teachers
- Online engagement portal
- Email feedback

Framework

- *Program familiarity*
- *Achieving program goals / equitable service delivery*
- *Program experiences*

Key Findings

Program Familiarity

- General support for the program tied to positive first-hand experiences and perceptions. Support linked to desire for minor adjustments to the program.
- Some students have a lack of understanding of the program, specifically who their SRO is and how they can support students.

Achieving Program Goals / Equitable Service Delivery

- Participants felt that the program is overall achieving positive outcomes. The most valued aspects include relationship-building, providing mentorship/support, contributing to safety/security in schools, as well as supporting teachers, administration, and school staff.
- Other positive outcomes include sports-related programs which support students' sense of community and belonging at school.
- Significant value in supporting safe/secure school environments, providing safety training and drills, and providing positive CPS representation.
- The primary gap identified from both service delivery and experience is a lack of consistent SRO in each school.
- Another gap reported was regular and mandatory training for SROs, specifically for working with children and youth and supporting mental health.
- These gaps lead to concerns about capacity and resources for SROs to do their jobs, as well as challenges to prioritize proactive work when they must respond to issues in a reactive way.
- Overall agreement that students are benefitting regardless of their background or identity.
- SROs felt they had strong relationships and positive interactions with students of different ethnocultural backgrounds and 2SLGBTQI+ communities. No comments provided for interactions for students with disabilities.
- Some students report feeling fear, discomfort, or anxiety around police
- Some students reported unequal treatment

Program Experiences

- Students shared a range of experiences, from positive to neutral, negative, and uncertain.
- Students self-identifying as Racialized often shared negative experiences including feeling unsafe or uncomfortable with SROs in schools.
- CPS staff and SROs shared overwhelmingly positive experiences and highly value their roles in schools.

Additional Context

The Argyle engagement took place during the COVID-19 pandemic which required the consultant to rely on technology to reach participants. Efforts to recruit students for virtual face-to-face conversations did poorly, which resulted in criticism of engagement methods. This criticism led to the student re-engagement effort that resulted in engagement with elementary students by ERU, with junior and senior high students by ActionDignity, and with teachers and support staff by ERU.

Police Engaging Youth in Schools: Elementary Student Engagement – What We Heard Report

Agency: Engage Resource Unit (ERU), City of Calgary

Timeframe: January 2023 – March 2023

Participant types and numbers:

- Students: 115 (50 in-person, 65 online)
- **Total: 115**

Methodology

- Focused on Racialized students in grades five and six.
- Research was done in person with four classes in the City Hall Open Minds Classrooms program: Two in person and two virtually.

Framework

- *Perceptions of police officers and the School Resource officer program*
- *Let's create the BEST School Resource Officer program, together!*

Key Findings

Perceptions of Police Officers and the School Resource Officer Program

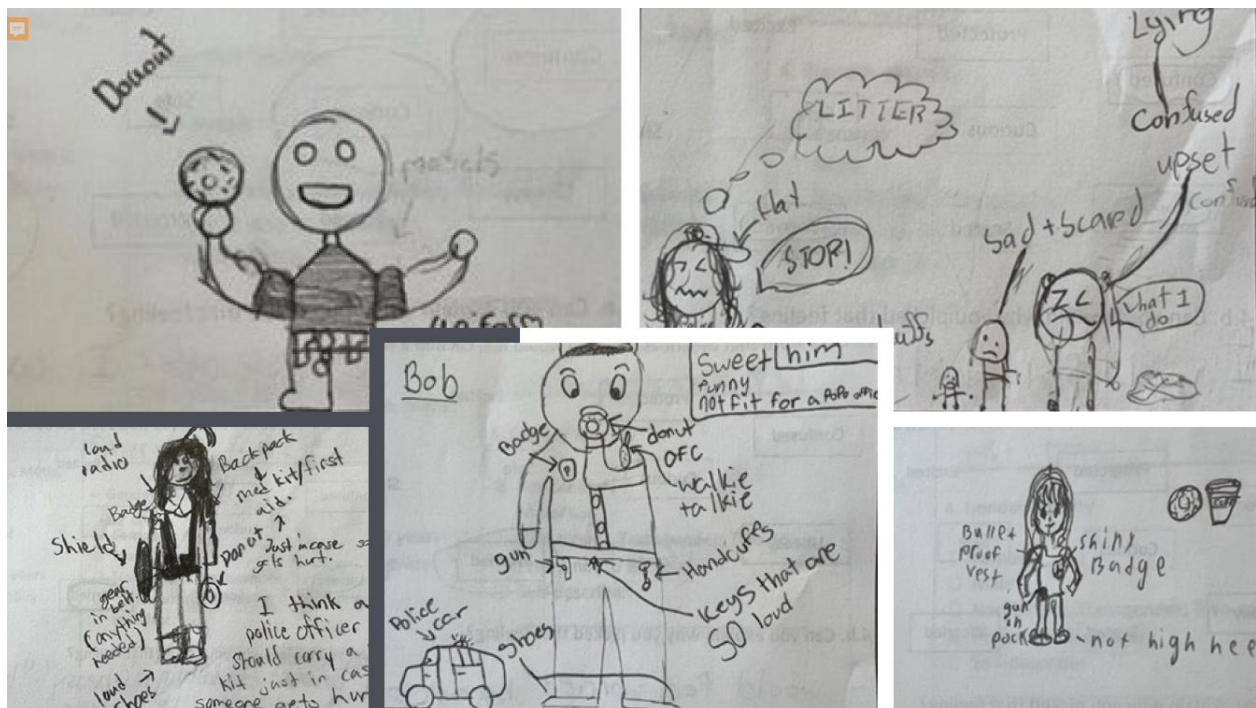
- Conversations started with generalized silly sentiments about police officers - “donuts.” Most students think of police officers as males. Pictures show a lot of weapons, some donuts - imagery includes lots of stereotypes. See “Visual feedback from elementary students” below.
- The general idea of police is positive. They understand the benefits of an officer’s role (what they should be doing at school). However, this does not match their experience based on level of shock/confusion they said they would feel when asked about an officer being in the school.
- Officer presence:
- In the scenario given where a child sees an officer walking down the hall in their direction (an innocent and plausible scenario) the officer presence is not normal and leads to high levels of uncertainty, confusion, worry and nervousness. Many children worry that the officer is there for them, thinking they did something wrong even though they know they did not. They are worried they are going to get in trouble. Many worried that if an officer is there, something bad is happening like a bad person being there or they are going to have a lockdown drill - which is also perceived as bad. Young students want to know that the officer is there and why they are there to remove element of surprise/confusion and fear.
- Perception is reality: Cannot dismiss direct experience with officers in community/other countries and assume that it will not come with the child into the classroom.
- Lockdowns:
- Seeing officers during lockdowns contributes to negative associations and feelings of fear.

- Students are associating officer presence with lockdown exercises which many stated are scary and stressful experiences. They know lockdowns are to protect them from “bad guys” that might be in the school.
- Students think an officer’s presence indicates a really bad thing is about to happen (lockdown experience) or is happening (bad guy in school).
- Some comments indicate that some students do not understand the exercises are a drill. This could be an issue of language barriers.
- Many students spoke of how scary the lockdowns are, even though they know they are for practice. They know that they are to practice what would happen if a shooter were in the school.
- Lockdown experiences are perpetuating a stressful/negative association with police officers.
- Trauma-informed approaches should be applied to lockdown exercises. We must recognize that these drills are traumatic, and that trauma needs to be managed.
- Some students fear officers. This cannot be ignored.

Let’s create the BEST School Resource Officer program, together!

- Students want calm, gentle and friendly officers.
- They want to have fun and be taught interesting things.
- School is a fantastic opportunity to build that relationship and give children a direct positive experience that will be more influential than the other indirect ones.
- Positive relationship building will require more time in school doing non-lockdown related activities.

Visual feedback from elementary students



Insights and Experiences from Junior and Senior High School Students Regarding the SRO Program

Agency: ActionDignity

Timeframe: July 2022 – April 2023

Participant types and numbers:

- Students: 211 (49 in-person, 162 online)
- Families: 14 (1 in-person, 13 online)
- **Total: 225**

Methodology

- Focus on Racialized, 2SLGBTQI+ and students with disabilities
- Students in grades six through twelve including a few recent graduates
- Connections made through ActionDignity’s project team, including Community Connectors
- Small focus groups with in-depth interviews were used to facilitate conversations - both in-person and online
- Two classes agreed to participate in the engagement:
 - A class of Indigenous and self-identified 2SLGBTQI+ students
 - A class of high-school students older than eighteen

Framework

- *Category 1: Baseline perception of the CPS in general and SRO program*
- *Category 2: Root causes*
- *Category 3: Current program assessment*
- *Category 4: Building trust, relationships and visioning the future of police engagement in schools*

Demographics

Key Demographics of Student-Participants	
Black / Black biracial	101
Indigenous	39
Southeast Asian	31
South Asian	25
Middle Eastern	7
Latinx	5
Central Asian	3
Total students	211
Intersectionalities with students above	
2SLGBTQI+	23

Living with disability	2
Students by grade	
Grade 6	4
Junior high	41
Senior high	136
Recent grad	30
Family	14
Total students and families	225

Ethnocultural groups represented (self-identified by participants):

African Canadian	Canadian	Indigenous	Sri Lankan
African/Indigenous	Chinese	Lebanese	Sudanese
Asian	Colombian	Metis	Sudanese (South)
Bengali	Egyptian	Mexican	Vietnamese
Black	Ethiopian	Nigerian	Vietnamese/White
Black/African American	Eritrean	Pakistani	White
Black/African Canadian	Filipino	Punjabi	
Black/White	Indian (East)	South Asian	

Schools represented by participants:

Almadina Language Charter Academy	Calgary Academy	FA	Joanne Cardinal-Schubert
Annie Gale	Captain Nicola Goddard	Father Lacombe	John G. Diefenbaker
Balmoral	Centennial	FE Osborne	Lester B. Pearson
Balmoral Junior	Central Memorial	FFCA South Middle School	Lord Beaverbrook
Bishop Grandin	Chestermere Lake	Forest Lawn	Louis Dean
Bishop McNally	Crescent Heights	Glenmore Christian Academy	Nelson Mandela
Bishop O'Byrne	Crossing Park	Grant McEwan	North Point
Bishop Pinkham	Discovering Choices	Griffith Woods	Northcott Prairie
Blessed Marie-Rose	Dr. E.P. Scarlett	H.D. Cartwright	Notre Dame
Bob Edwards	Dr. Gordon Higgins	Heritage Christian Academy	Saints
Bowness	ED	Jack James	
Branton School	Ernest Manning	James Fowler	

Key Findings

Category 1: Baseline perception of the CPS in general and SRO program

- Sentiments
- Sentiments expressed towards SROs were:
 - 41% negative
 - 40% positive
 - 17% mixed/balance
- Among specific demographics, negative sentiments are more prominent:
 - Indigenous (63%),
 - Black (47%),
 - 2SLGBTQI+ (50%), and
 - Students with disabilities (65%).
- Positive sentiments included:
 - intervene / enforce law / justice
- safety / security
 - helpful and useful
 - protect, serve
- Negative sentiments included:
 - racism, profiling, targeting
 - fear
 - bias, discrimination, prejudice
 - corruption / scandal
- Students feel positive about being protected in crisis situations.
- Many students do not understand what SROs do specifically.
- It is unclear what outcomes and changes are expected from this program.

Category 2: Root causes

- Many participants cited social media and news as well as family history with police and stories from elders as factors that have contributed to their negative perceptions of police officers.
- About 60% of students had in-school and direct experiences with SROs, 24% had indirect experiences and 16% had little or no experiences.
- Negative sentiments on racism, discrimination, and profiling, stem from indirect experiences outside of school, shaped by observations in family, community, and social media.

Category 3: Current program assessment

- Experience with police
 - More than half of direct experiences happened at school.
 - More than half of direct school experiences were positive.
 - Face to face interaction in school results in students forming positive perceptions of police officers.
- Do personal experiences align with program intentions?
 - The SRO program intends to:
 - Build relationships with students

- Teach students about crime and safety
 - Conduct school lockdown drills
 - Help all students view CPS as a trusted resource in society
 - 51% of students expressed alignment with the program as described above
 - 40% of students said their experiences do not align with program intentions
- Unique experiences provided by Indigenous and Black participants:
 - Indigenous students tend to not want to interact with officers.
 - Black students feel unsafe and that they are more likely to experience discrimination.
- Some participants shared specific negative experiences with officers:
 - One almost dropped out of school; still living through the trauma and frustrations with police officers and always feel scared whenever a police officer is around.
- Students have concerns around transparency of the SRO program.
- Some participants critiqued the hiring, selection, and school placement for SROs
- Some students questioned how officers are selected to work in the program.
- Students believe that the SRO program benefits:
 - All (27%)
 - Principals and teachers (27%)
 - White students (16%)
 - Racialized, Indigenous, Black, and bullied students (15%)
 - Unclear / unknown (15%)

Category 4: Building trust, relationships and visioning the future of police engagement in schools

- Changes to the SRO program will not be effective if made in isolation. The reimaged SRO program should be implemented as part of broad CPS anti-racism strategies.
- Building positive relationships and trust is key to mitigating Racialized students' anxiety, caution, worry and fear. Also, students:
 - want more frequent and more meaningful engagement, information, education and supports.
 - want officers to be able to respond to crisis situations quickly.
 - are confident in the ability of CPS officers to protect and serve.
- Many students want support not typically offered by police officers that are more reminiscent of social supports (i.e., areas of psychology and social work).
- SROs should act as role models.

Police Engaging Youth in Schools: Teacher Engagement – What We Heard Report

Agency: Engage Resource Unit (ERU), City of Calgary

Timeframe: January 2023 – February 2023

Participant types and numbers:

- Principals, teachers, and support staff: 551 (0 in-person, 551 online)
- **Total: 551**

Methodology

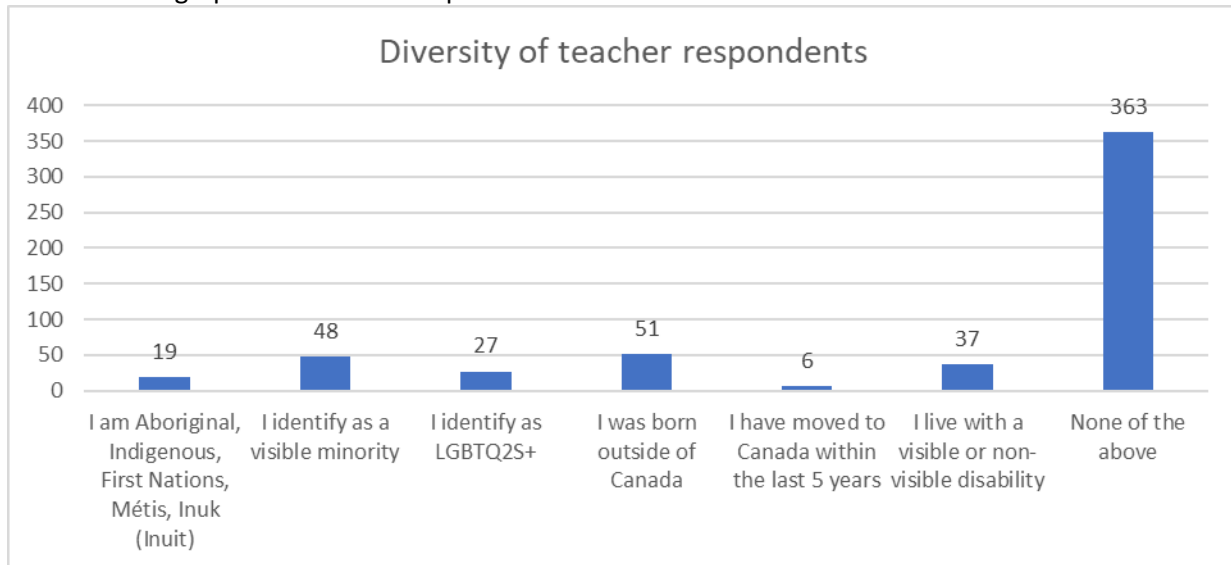
- A private online survey, through ERU's portal, was used to reach participants.
- The survey request was a call for principals, teachers, and support staff from diverse groups with lived experience in and now working in the school community. Other school community members were also invited to participate.
- Messaging from the survey portal:
 - Feedback from diverse school staff is important
 - We welcome feedback from all teachers, administrators, and EDI/AR (Equity, Diversity and Inclusion/Anti-Racism) committee members.
 - It is especially important that we gather feedback from staff who are Racialized, identify as 2SLGBTQI+ and/or living with a visible or non-visible disability.
 - Diverse adults in the school environment may offer varying perspectives on the role of police in schools and the current service delivery model. These perspectives, along with feedback from students in grades 4-12, will help collaborators reimagine what police engaging youth in schools should look like. Change cannot happen without your feedback.
- Word was spread through Open Minds coordinators, school boards and personal connections.

Framework

- Assessing the current SRO program
- Personal observations
- Root causes of negative feelings
- Reimagining the School Resource Officer Program

Diversity of Participants

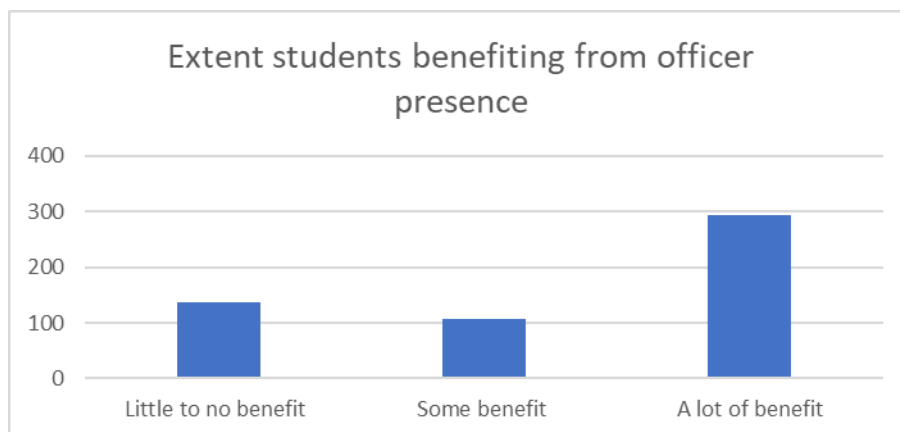
- Demographics of teacher responses:

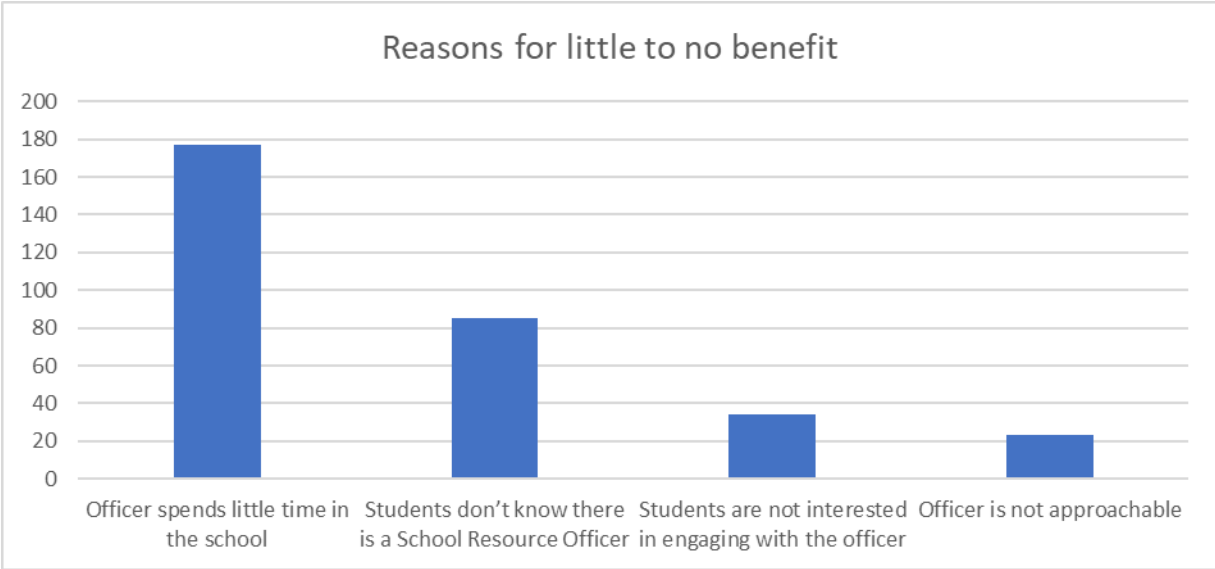
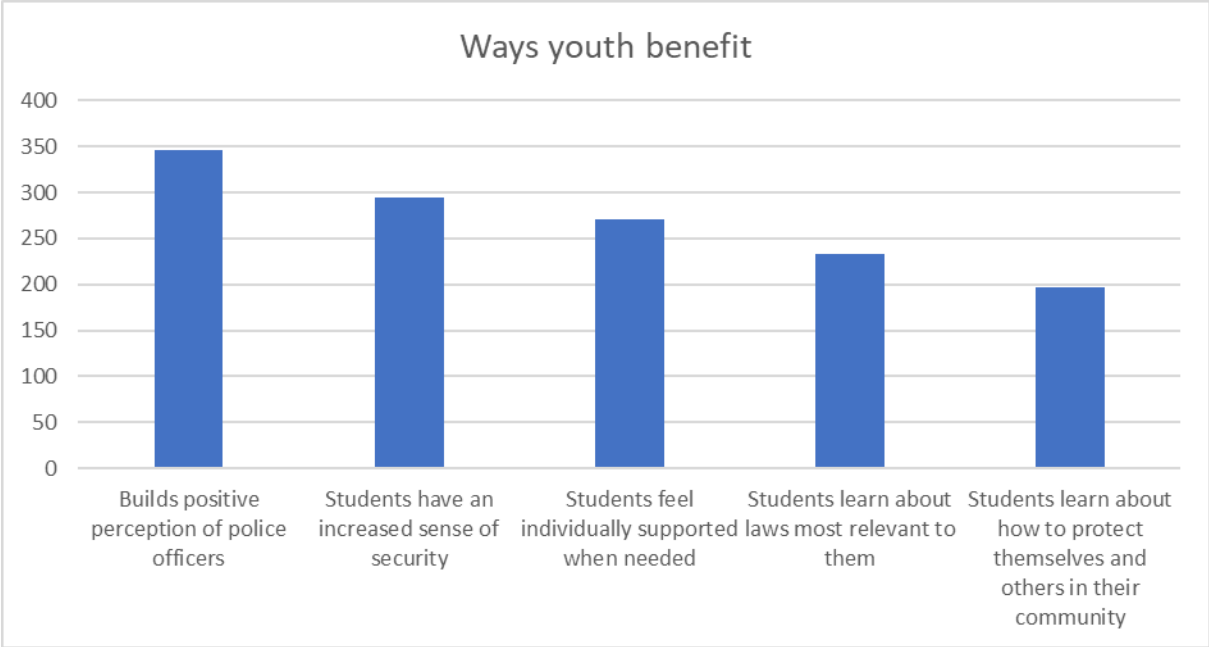


Key Findings

Assessing the current SRO program

- Teachers were clear that they appreciate and value the SRO program and that they feel it provides students with many benefits. These benefits include building a positive relationship with officers, sense of security, individual support when needed, education about laws and how to protect themselves, among many others.
- The main reason teachers shared there was little to no benefit was simply because the SRO was not there enough for benefits to be felt by students. This naturally means that many students do not know they have an SRO.



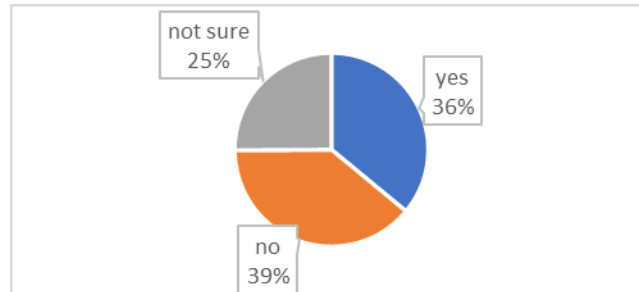


- Nearly half of teachers said there were no negative impacts to students. Of the 20% who said negative impacts exist, reasons included:
- Students involved in bad behaviour aren't happy with the police presence, but that was more reason to increase officer presence.
- Teachers mentioned that shy students are not equally comfortable talking with officers compared to outgoing students.

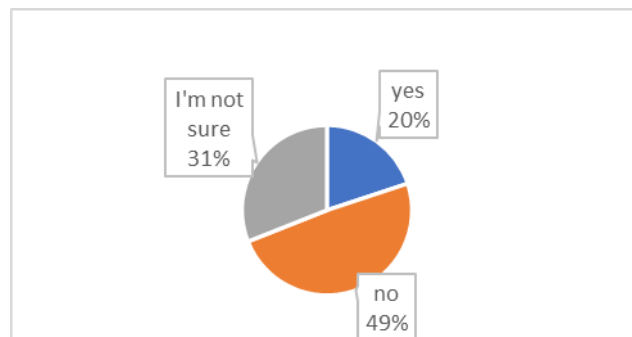
- Many teachers acknowledged that newcomers and Racialized students are fearful of police and may experience discomfort with them being in their “safe space” at school.

Personal observations

- Teacher perceptions: Do students experience equal benefits from the program?



- Why did you say “No”?
 - There are not enough SROs
 - SRO time is not equally distributed
 - Fear and anxiety
 - Not all interactions are positive
- Teacher perceptions: Are there demographics who experience negative impacts or inequality?



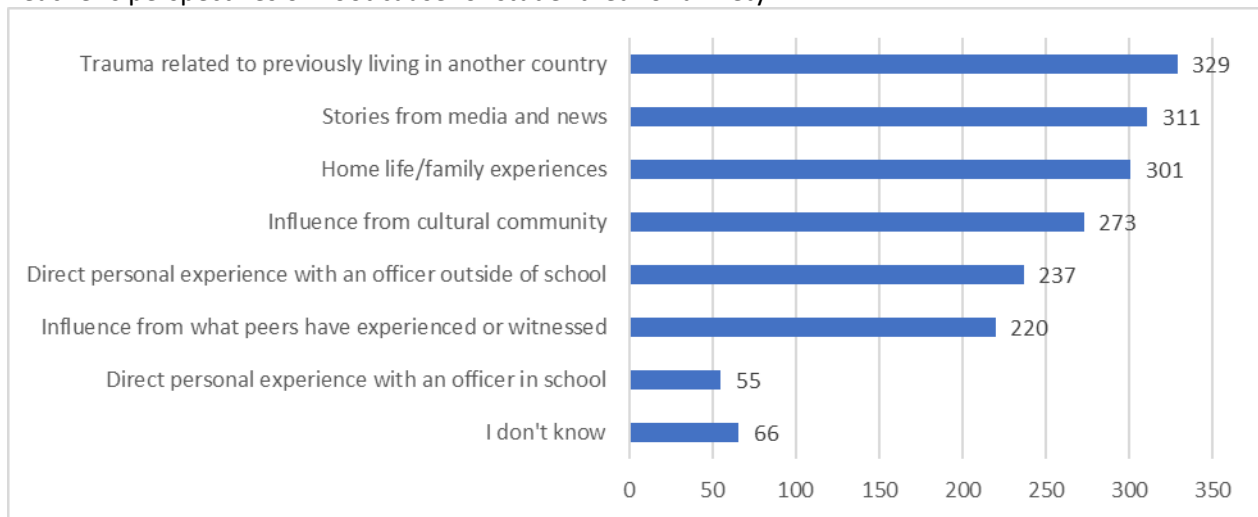
- Why did you say “Yes”? Which demographics do you feel experience negative impacts or inequality?
 - Those with negative interactions (distrust of police and the law)
 - Racialized students
 - Refugees/immigrants from war-torn countries
 - At risk youth involved in delinquent behaviour
 - Indigenous, Black, 2SLGBTQI+, low-income, neurodiverse students
- Other key findings:

- When the officer is there, some teachers shared that students are not interested in engaging with them or they are not approachable for students to do so.
- Three percent of teachers have witnessed inequitable treatment, discrimination, or racist behavior from the SRO.
 - Inequitable treatment (7 mentions)
 - Comments directed at students (3)
 - Comments about "types" of people (1)
 - Stereotyping (1)
 - Dismissive of pronouns (1)
 - Inappropriate treatment of neurodiverse student (1)
 - Officers w/ "thin blue line" patch on uniform in the school (1)
 - Targeting students (1)
- Twelve percent of teachers have directly heard students talking about inequitable treatment, discrimination, or racist behavior.
 - Racial profiling / racism (21)
 - Students talking about community related events, no school ones (13)
 - Students feeling unfairly targeted (8)
 - Students feeling discriminated against, but teachers say students are not taking responsibility for bad choices/behaviour (8)
 - Comments about police in general, not about their SRO (3)
 - Distrust of police (3)
 - Dismissive attitude (2)
 - Stories heard specifically from Black students (2)
 - Story about police was told by parent (1)
 - Other teacher sharing they felt uncomfortable with SRO in school (1)
 - Comments about police interactions with a student's parents (1)
 - SRO confronted student at school about outside school events (1)
 - Students saw "thin blue line" on uniform (1)

Root causes of negative feelings

- Teachers were asked to comment on where they think negative feelings towards police originate.

Teacher's perspectives on root cause for student fear or anxiety:



Reimagining the School Resource Officer Program

- Some teachers and support staff are happy with the current program, but most see opportunity for improvements
- Relationship building requires time - familiarity and relationship building with police needs to start at a young age, so the impact of officer in older years is more positive
- All students have a need for SRO, but the need and the benefit from the officer presence may be different
- At the heart of equity is recognizing that the needs of students are different and should be managed as such, this means recognizing that Racialized students have a perception and lived experience that can lead to discomfort and fear, needs to be managed in a sensitive and trauma-informed manner in the school environment.

Police Engaging Youth in Schools: Roundtable – What We Heard Report

Agency: Engage Resource Unit (ERU), City of Calgary

Timeframe: June 2023

Participant types and numbers:

- Students: 32 in-person, no online option
- Parents: 16 in-person, no online option
- Teachers and support staff: 23 in-person, no online option
- Principals and vice principals: 25 in-person, no online option
- School Boards: seven in person, no online option
- **Total: 103**

Methodology

- Two roundtable sessions were held on June 16 and June 20, 2023.
- Sessions were led by an independent Facilitator, Anne Sureshkumar, who has a background in social work and counselling, focused primarily on immigrant populations. As the Facilitator, she committed to ensuring a trauma-informed approach to the sessions as well as being available for trauma support afterward, should participants require.
- The intention was to have all members of the school community hear from all other members of the school community without CPS in the middle.
- Findings from the student re-engagement work, as well as the teacher survey were presented to participants.
- Participants were split into groups of four, and then spent 20-25 minutes talking about each of topics 1-3 with respect to how to improve/transform/re-imagine the program.
- Participants were then asked to form groups of their peers (students, teachers, etc.) to discuss topic four.
- Facilitators lead each group discussion.
- Data was captured by note-takers and could also be submitted by hand-written sticky notes.
- The purpose was to focus on tangible steps to improve or re-imagine the program to benefit all students.

Framework

- Topic 1: Resources: The number of officers and the time that officers spend in schools
- Topic 2: Officer role: The role of the officer and the content that officers share with students
- Topic 3: Officer training and quality of interaction
- Topic 4: Communication

Key Themes

Topic 1: Resources: The number of officers and the time that officers spend in schools

- Increase familiarity with students and parents
- Collaborate across the settlement and social services sector
- Cultural/anti-racism/EDI training and building empathy
- Give students a say
- Start early
- Clarify and communicate SRO role
- Humanize the SRO
- Provide consistent and scheduled face time for all students
- Communicate with parents
- Use media wisely
- Provide SROs with flexible work hours

Topic 2: Officer role: The role of the officer and the content that officers share with students

- Roles for SROs:
 - All levels
 - Casually engage with students in hallways and classrooms
 - Visit classrooms - casual pop ins, sit down, join in
 - Participate in or organize sports/play during breaks
 - Attend school events. This is a part of school culture/ Attend as many events as possible.
 - Liaise between parents/families/schools
 - Provide education
 - Bullying and community safety (elementary)
 - Drugs and gangs (junior high and high school)
 - Online safety (junior high)
 - Cyberbullying (high school)
 - Elementary specific
 - Participate in sports/play during breaks
 - Junior high specific
 - Provide mentorship
 - Connect students to resources
 - High school specific
 - Manage fights and bullying at school
- Roles not for SROs:
 - All levels
 - Law enforcement (check recommendations)
 - Mental health supports
 - High school specific
 - Mental health related roles, including being a safe person and crises
 - Safety education, including online and traffic/road safety and for emergency situations.
 - Providing legal assistance

Topic 3: Officer training and quality of interaction

- Training: soft skills, working with children, equity and trauma-informed anti-racism, EDI microaggressions, implicit bias, intersectionality, active listening, privilege and allyship,
- Support (more resources, consistent delivery of services) AR resources, reading lists and activities, mentorship, buddy system with teachers/school counsellors/psychologists
- Leverage support from and collaboration with immigrant-serving agencies
- Volunteer or get recommended for the role
- Screening process includes student and teacher input
- Representation of community
- Unique school supports where needed. For example, work with Indigenous teaching strategists when available
- Uniforms: Let students see officers in and out of uniform. Explain weapons and rules of use.

Topic 4: Communication

- Principals and school boards
 - Shared an inconsistent experience with their SRO and the communication they receive.
- Teachers and teaching assistants
 - Direction communication and relationships with SROs
 - First SRO visit should be a staff meeting
- Parents
 - Communication with parents through business cards, school email updates, announcements from teachers
 - Feedback systems like surveys, paper drop boxes
- Students and recent graduates
 - Involve teachers in gathering feedback from students

Appendix B: Current Canadian Context

We looked at recent SRO developments across Canadian police jurisdictions to compare with our work and to look for best practices.

Note the Edmonton Public School report, below, contains a very recent and thorough examination of current literature, with a particular focus on Canadian research where possible.

Active and cancelled SRO programs:

Active SRO programs	Cancelled SRO programs
Vancouver – Sept 2023	Victoria – 2023
Calgary	New Westminster – 2021
Edmonton - Catholic	Vancouver – 2021-2023
Regina	Edmonton – Public – 2020 (suspended)
Saskatoon	Hamilton – 2020
Winnipeg	Ottawa – 2021
	Peel – 2020
	Toronto – 2017
	Waterloo – 2021 (suspended)

EDMONTON – PUBLIC SCHOOL DIVISION (Program suspended)

- Report: **The Experience of Racialized and Marginalized Populations with the School Resource Officer (SRO) Program at Edmonton Public Schools**
- [https://www.epsb.ca/media/epsb/news/board/SchoolResourceOfficer\(SRO\)programstudy.pdf](https://www.epsb.ca/media/epsb/news/board/SchoolResourceOfficer(SRO)programstudy.pdf) (full report)
- Developed a roving youth officer position that works within their districts responding to youth related calls. It was later disbanded.
- Review of SRO program released.
- The report highlights criticism of the EPSB’s decision to suspend its SRO program, and notes that “most of our student and caregiver respondents feel that the SRO program prevents crime and violence in school, protects students from criminals in the community, builds relationships between students and the police, provides students with additional adult mentors, and makes students feel safe at school.”

The Edmonton Public School Division report makes similar recommendations to ours, including:

- Better communication with students and parents to educate them about the purpose of SROs and their duties.
- More opportunities for parents to meet with SROs and ask questions about the program

- Better screening and training of SROs to ensure that they know to interact with students from diverse backgrounds.
- Pay close attention to soft skills in the hiring process, such as communication skills with children and youth.
- Police services need to be better versed on the harms and consequences of racial discrimination within Canadian policing, though there is insufficient research demonstrating that these trainings are an effective strategy.
- SROs should continue to receive training and acquire background knowledge on the history and consequences of colonialism and the trauma that has been inflicted on Indigenous people, both by police and other institutions.
- Greater opportunities for SROs to engage with and mentor students in informal settings or during extracurricular activities.
- Education via the SRO about social media, drugs, vaping, sexual harassment, and other topics should be made available to all students on a frequent basis.
- Consider program alternatives such as pairing the SRO with a social worker, reframing the position as a Health and Safety position, liaising with community or with counsellors.

The report includes some recommendations that we do not have, including:

- Messaging about how the program differentiates from regular policing, which is particularly important for families who have had negative experiences with the Edmonton Police Service.
- Expand the SRO program: SROs should be present and armed to better deter crime and violence and keep students and staff safe.
- Definition of diverse students can be expanded to include those with socioeconomic disadvantages.

The report did not mention – at least at the summary level:

- Continuous improvement

EDMONTON: CATHOLIC SCHOOL DIVISION (Program active)

- **Report: Bucerius, S., Samuels, K., Wortley, S. (2022, May). An Evaluation of the Edmonton Catholic School Division’s School Resource Officer Program – Executive Summary.**

<https://www.ecsd.net/ci/p/43648> (executive summary)

<https://sbecsdstor.blob.core.windows.net/media/Default/fgg/5/ECSD%20SRO%20Evaluation.pdf>

(full report)

Key Findings

- There is broad support for the SRO program from the general student population as well as other stakeholders including parents, teachers, and principals
- A minority feel targeted or intimidated by SROs, distrust SROs, or have reported negative experiences. These feelings and experiences tend to be higher for Black and Indigenous students but are experienced across all groups
- Program strengths
 - relationship building
 - resource

- education
- de-escalation and diversion efforts
- safety
- Areas for growth
 - communicate about the SRO program and officer activities
 - accountability and oversight
 - staffing
 - presence

VANCOUVER (Program reinstated)

- No SRO program May 2021- August 2023.
- School Liaison Officers returning in September 2023.
- Changes include new uniform (polo shirt), smaller guns, unmarked car, diverse hiring.
- From the Edmonton Catholic School Division report (link above):
 - Researchers conducting an evaluation of Vancouver’s SRO Program also found that most 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).
 - 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” (Argyle, 2021).
- Following this review, SRO programs in Vancouver Public Schools and New Westminister District were dismantled.

VICTORIA (Program cancelled)

- No SRO’s, unanimous decision from the school board.
- **News: Chan, A. (2023, June 1). Victoria school board votes to end police liaison program.**
<https://vancouverisland.ctvnews.ca/victoria-school-board-votes-to-end-police-liaison-program-1.6423252> (article)
- "There have been many positive interactions through the SPLO program, but undeniably there are some students and staff who do not feel safe with police in schools," said Duncan in a statement Thursday.

- "The decision to end the program speaks to the board's commitment to provide trauma informed support and inclusive spaces for all students."

REGINA (Program active)

- **News: Quon, A. (2023, June 14) Review of school resource officer program in Regina complete, but school boards won't discuss until fall.**
<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/regina-school-resource-officer-1.6876224>
(article)
- The review is a chance to strengthen the program
- According to the 2022 annual report on the SRO program, its officers offered 207 presentations covering subjects like cyberbullying, interpersonal violence, gangs, drugs, and social media education during the 2022/2023 school year.
- The officers also took part in 209 lockdown drills this year and conducted 221 mediations at schools over things like school yard bullying, fighting, or cyberbullying.

SASKATOON (Program active)

<https://saskatoonpolice.ca/sru/> (website)

The goals of this program are:

- To develop positive attitudes and relationships between youth and police;
- To engage and work cooperatively in partnership with school officials, staff, students, parents and the community;
- To proactively identify and address school concerns or problems;
- Preserve public safety and prevent crime;
- Conduct investigations and provide information on community safety issues;
- Provide a visible presence in the school and the community by participating in mediations, class presentations, and mentorship programs;
- Work in conjunction with other government and community-based organizations to support positive youth development and risk reduction;
- Schedule and facilitate mandatory practice lockdown drills; and
- Collaborate with community partners as part of the Community Threat Assessment Team regarding incidents related to Violent Threat Risk Prevention.

WINNIPEG (Program active)

- SRO's only in Elementary and Junior Highs.
- Have ordered new uniforms (polo shirts) but have not yet been approved for use in schools.

TORONTO (Program cancelled)

- Removed school resource officer program in June of 2020.
- **News: Braun, L. (2022, November 6). Is it time to get School Resource Officers back in Toronto schools?**

<https://torontosun.com/news/local-news/is-it-time-to-get-school-resource-officers-back-in-toronto-schools>

- Said Reid: “The more we remove police from the community, the further we erode the relationships we need to keep our neighbourhoods, and schools, safe.”
- Stopping the program, he added, “failed to recognize the positive work of our members and ignored those parents, teachers, administrators, and students who believed officers keep schools safe.”
- From the Edmonton catholic school division report (link above):
- 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, 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).

WATERLOO (Program suspended)

<https://www.wrps.on.ca/en/our-community/youth-programs.aspx> (website)

- The program was suspended in 2021 and there are no references to it being reinstated. However, the website for the Waterloo Regional Police still shows the program (described below).
- The Waterloo Regional Police Service (WRPS) School Resource Officer (SRO) program consists of 10 Constables who are specifically assigned to high schools and elementary schools in Waterloo Region. The goals of the program are to develop a positive relationship between youth and police, reduce youth victimization and partner with school staff to proactively address student, family, and school issues.
- SROs are there to provide schools with a reliable and consistent point of contact within the Waterloo Regional Police Service.
- In addition to responding to school generated calls for service, police can participate in schools in a number of ways:
 - Lockdown / Hold & Secure / Shelter-In-Place and Bomb Threat Drills
 - Suspension Re-entry Meetings
 - Violent Threat Risk Assessment process
- The SRO will make regular school visits to spend time with students and help develop awareness of various topics. SROs are happy to speak with students about a number of topics:
 - Story Time (Gr. K, 1 & 2)
 - Bike Safety
 - Stranger Awareness
 - Bullying/Respect
 - Community Helpers
 - Internet/Social Media Safety
 - The Law (General Discussion)
 - Sexual Harassment
 - Criminal Harassment (Stalking)

- Drugs
- Mental Health
- Weapons
- Policing as a Career Choice

Analysis:

- The SRO reports out of Edmonton (for each of Public and Catholic school divisions) most closely align with our engagement, findings, and recommendations.
- Specifically, the public report is most similar in terms of its recommendations.
- Other jurisdictions are struggling with similar issues:
- SRO programs have broad support.
- SRO programs are understaffed and cannot reach all students.
- Not all students experience the program equally, and students that identify as Racialized, 2SLGBTQI+ and/or living with a visible or non-visible disability are more likely to be afraid, have discomfort or anxiety around police.
- Building relationships is central to the role.
- Soft skills, willingness to work with young people and communication skills are critical to the role
- AR/EDI training are essential to program improvement.