

## AFD Ep. 312 Links and Notes - Policing in Schools

- History of police in schools
  - <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2712260> "The Man Nobody Liked: Toward A Social History of the Truant Officer, 1840-1940" | David Tyack and Michael Berkowitz | American Quarterly Vol. 29, No. 1 (Spring, 1977), pp. 31-54
  - <https://txssc.txstate.edu/topics/law-enforcement/articles/brief-history>  
First officer in a school in the US in Flint, MI late 1950s, meant to foster positive interactions with the community.  
SROs are licensed peace officers employed by either the county or local law enforcement agency that are assigned permanently to serve the school district or campus.<sup>1,9</sup> When at school however, SROs are treated as school staff and supervised by the school's principal in some cases; when not at the school, SROs are supervised by the law enforcement agency that employs them.<sup>1</sup> A school-based law enforcement (SBLE) officer is another common title for officers that work in schools. Although these two terms are often used interchangeably, subtle differences exist between SBLE officers and SROs. Most often, SBLE officers are employed by the school district through a school-based law enforcement department, rather than a law enforcement agency. Thus, SBLE officers are employed by the school district in which they work.<sup>4</sup>

Numbers of officers in school rose during the 90s due to perceived increase in juvenile crime, then again after the 1999 Columbine shooting.

In 1997, law enforcement officers were present in 22 percent of schools nationally.<sup>2</sup> During the 2003-2004 school year, principals reported law enforcement in 36 percent of schools, increasing to 40 percent by 2007-2008<sup>5</sup>. Students have also reported an increase in law enforcement presence in schools. According to the National Crime Victimization Survey, 54 percent of students reported that security or law enforcement was present in their schools in 1999, while almost 70 percent reported law enforcement presence in 2013.

The federal government began to pass legislation in response to the public's fear that juveniles were becoming more dangerous. For example, the Gun Free Act of 1994 gave schools the authority to have a "zero tolerance" policy towards weapons on school campuses. Schools throughout America broadened this policy to include illegal drugs and alcohol. This federal act removed the arbitrary nature of school policies and put formal disciplinary standards into place, such as zero tolerance policies. Law enforcement officers were the most obvious individuals that could be called on to enforce the new policies.

The federal action that established a large amount of funding for law enforcement officers in schools throughout the United States was the creation of the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS). The COPS office helped with defining, implementing, and standardizing community-oriented policing, which encompassed placing officers on school grounds.<sup>7</sup> In 1999, the COPS office created the Cops in Schools (CIS) grant program, which awarded over \$750 million for the hiring of more than 6,500 SROs.<sup>5</sup> In total, the CIS program helped fund over 13,000 SROs in schools throughout the United States.<sup>8</sup> In addition,

some states have provided funding for hiring law enforcement in schools. Combining substantial funding with the threat of rampant juveniles, assigning police to schools became common practice.

- [https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/field\\_document/aclu\\_bullies\\_in\\_blue\\_4\\_11\\_17\\_final.pdf](https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/field_document/aclu_bullies_in_blue_4_11_17_final.pdf)

During the War on Drugs: Posing as high school students, young police recruits were sent into schools in California, Virginia, and the District of Columbia to find and arrest students with drugs, most often minimal amounts of marijuana.<sup>44</sup> In Los Angeles, 176 students were arrested from just six high schools as part of a tactical raid—the overwhelming majority for marijuana possession.<sup>45</sup> These tactics were not an essential function of public safety, but rather a means to survey, catalogue, monitor, and control youth of color.

A nationwide survey revealed that over 87 percent of adults believed that there was a rise in serious juvenile crime throughout the 1980s.<sup>52</sup> Yet, while admissions to juvenile detention centers had grown by 600 percent in the years between 1977 and 1986, there was no violent juvenile crime wave. In fact, much of what young people were being detained for were minor offenses that were criminal only because of their status as juveniles.<sup>53</sup> In Alabama, 74 percent of incarcerated children were detained for status offenses (e.g., skipping school), misdemeanors, probation violations, and other minor charges.

National media and policy debates were permeated with fear of juvenile crime throughout the 1990s. Policymakers and politicians cast youth as potential “superpredators” who, in the words of John Dilulio, an advisor to President Bill Clinton, were primed to “kill or maim on impulse, without any intelligible motive.”<sup>60</sup> While youth violence was actually declining by the mid-1990s and was never concentrated in schools, government officials called for increased policing of schools.

Alongside the passage of the Gun-Free Schools Act, the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 allocated \$9 billion to increase the numbers of police officers on streets and encourage crime prevention through “community policing.” The federal Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) was formed to administer the funds. Even early COPS grantees placed emphasis on youth policing, once again cast as “prevention.” Among the early grantees, the expanded Los Angeles Unified School District Police Department received funding in 1996 for more than 29 additional police officers.

- <http://www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/general/False%20Sense%20of%20Security%20-%20TT50.pdf>

Despite the fact that reported incidents of violence and crime in school were in decline at the time, the National Center for Education Statistics’ Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2013 report states that the percentage of students age 12 to 18 reporting the presence of security guards and/or police officers in their school increased from 54 percent in 1999 to 70 percent in 2003.

- Why are there police in schools?
- Some states require School Resource Officers (SROs) in schools.
  - MA law: Every chief of police, in consultation with the superintendent and subject to appropriation, shall assign at least 1 school resource officer to serve the city, town, commonwealth charter school, regional school district or county agricultural school.  
([https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXII/Chapter71/Section37P#:~:text=Section%2037P%3A%20School%20resource%20officers&text=\(b\)%20Every%20chief%20of%20police,district%20or%20county%20agricultural%20school.](https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXII/Chapter71/Section37P#:~:text=Section%2037P%3A%20School%20resource%20officers&text=(b)%20Every%20chief%20of%20police,district%20or%20county%20agricultural%20school.))
  - KY: Gov Beshear signed into law a bill requiring all KY schools to have an armed officer.  
(<https://www.courier-journal.com/story/news/politics/ky-legislature/2020/02/21/andy-beshear-signs-kentucky-bill-arming-school-resource-officers/4799288002/>)
- Some school districts have their own police departments.
  - It's hard to get an exact number on how common this is, but we know the following:
    - Of the 25 biggest school districts in the US, at least ten run their own police force.  
(<https://www.usnews.com/news/the-report/articles/2020-06-12/schools-districts-end-contracts-with-police-amid-ongoing-protests>)
    - Over 200 Texas school districts run their own police force.  
(<http://makemyschoolsafe.org/guide/police-schools/who-charge-school-police-officers>)
    - Houston ISD has a police force with a budget of about \$10 million and employs 200 officers.  
(<https://www.usnews.com/news/the-report/articles/2020-06-12/schools-districts-end-contracts-with-police-amid-ongoing-protests>)
  - Largely a response to high profile school violence. Despite data showing schools actually getting safer, events like Columbine led lawmakers and education leaders to invite law enforcement into schools.  
(<https://www.vox.com/identities/2018/9/20/17856416/school-discipline-policing-black-students-report>)
  - Very few states have standard training or responsibilities for School Resource Officers. (<https://c0arw235.caspio.com/dp/b7f93000cca7df9b701f44a8ae4d>)
    - Only 12 states require student-specific preparation  
(<https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2015/11/why-do-most-school-cops-have-no-student-training-requirements/414286/>)
    - Worth noting but this is kind of secondary to the fact that they probably shouldn't be there in the first place, regardless of what training they have.
- What is the effect of having police in schools?
  - No evidence that it makes schools safer.
    - From CRS: One summary of the body of literature on the effectiveness of SRO programs notes that: [s]tudies of SRO effectiveness that have

measured actual safety outcomes have mixed results, some show an improvement in safety and a reduction in crime; 43 others show no change.<sup>44</sup> Typically, studies that report positive results from SRO programs rely on participants' perceptions of the effectiveness of the program rather than on objective evidence. Other studies fail to isolate incidents of crime and violence, so it is impossible to know whether the positive results stem from the presence of SROs or are the results of other factors. (<https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R43126.pdf>)

- Criminalization of adolescent behavior
  - From Justice Policy Institute: Even when controlling for school poverty, schools with an SRO had nearly five times the rate of arrests for disorderly conduct as schools without an SRO. ([http://www.justicepolicy.org/uploads/justicepolicy/documents/educationunderarrest\\_fullreport.pdf](http://www.justicepolicy.org/uploads/justicepolicy/documents/educationunderarrest_fullreport.pdf))
- Money for cops but not counselors
  - From ACLU:
    - 1.7 million students are in schools with police but no counselors
    - 3 million students are in schools with police but no nurses
    - 6 million students are in schools with police but no school psychologists
    - 10 million students are in schools with police but no social workers
    - 14 million students are in schools with police but no counselor, nurse, psychologist, or social worker
  - Data shows that school-based mental health providers improve not only student health and performance, but also school safety. (<https://www.aclu.org/issues/juvenile-justice/school-prison-pipeline/cops-and-no-counselors>)
- Disproportionate effect on students of color and students with disabilities
  - TX: Police in schools hurt high school graduation and college enrollment rates of black boys. (<https://www.chalkbeat.org/2019/2/14/21121037/new-studies-point-to-a-big-downside-for-schools-bringing-in-more-police>)
- How do you get police out of schools?
  - Need to address the laws that require SROs in schools.
  - Need to invest (not just pay lip service) to social emotional health and support for students.
  - Growing energy in some communities around “peacebuilders” trained in conflict mediation, rather than police officers. This is largely a total reimagining of school safety and will take significant effort and resources to get right. (<https://www.chalkbeat.org/2020/6/9/21285709/some-school-districts-are-cutting-ties-with-police-whats-next>)
  - What about security guards? Conversation to date has mostly left them out of the conversation, but a lot of schools rely on (armed) security guards with even less oversight and training than School Resource Officers and there is a concern amongst some that removal of SROs will only increase the reliance on armed guards. (<https://www.chalkbeat.org/2020/6/9/21285709/some-school-districts-are-cutting-ties-with-police-whats-next>)

- For example, Minneapolis, despite cutting off their contract with the police, have said that school safety plans will still include security staff.
- Zero-Tolerance / Broken Windows Schooling
  - <http://www.justicepolicy.org/news/8775>
  - [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Improving\\_America%27s\\_Schools\\_Act\\_of\\_1994](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Improving_America%27s_Schools_Act_of_1994)
  - [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gun-Free\\_School\\_Zones\\_Act\\_of\\_1990](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gun-Free_School_Zones_Act_of_1990)