



Strategies for Youth
CONNECTING COPS & KIDS®



Fail: School Policing in Massachusetts

Media & Legislative Briefing

SEPTEMBER 15, 2020

Moderator



Jonathan Rodriguez

Senior Organizer American Federation of
Teachers

Board Member, Citizens for Juvenile Justice

Housekeeping

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- Event is recorded and permission is granted to record
- Q&A: Use "Raise Hand" function under "Participants" tab to ask questions for questions or write your question in the chat (submit "Colleen Shaddox").
- Please include name and affiliation in your question.
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Agenda: Report Findings

Speakers

- Leon Smith, Citizens for Juvenile Justice
- Lisa Thurau, Strategies for Youth

Agenda: Panel Discussion

- **Meenakshi Verma Agrawal**, parent of Framingham Public School students
- **Cassandra Bensahih**, parent and grandparent of Webster and Worcester Public Schools students
- **Bill Leukhardt**, parent of Lauren Rousseau, Sandy Hook Elementary Schoolteacher
- **Chanel**, youth advocate at More Than Words
- **Amaryllis Lopes**, program director of Elevated Thought and a cultural worker based in Lawrence

Agenda: Question and Answers

Question and Answer Session:

- Ask or submit questions in the chat, please include your full name and your media or legislative affiliation
- Participants on Facebook Live, submit questions in the comments



Lisa Thureau
Executive Director
Strategies for Youth



Leon Smith
Executive Director
Citizens for Juvenile Justice

Purpose of Report

- Widespread protests against police brutality and racial inequities have led to renewed focus on the role, purpose and need for police in schools.
- The role of school police is being considered in the police reform legislation
- Beliefs and decisions about the pros and cons of placing police in schools are more often fueled by emotions than informed by research.



School Policing in Massachusetts:

Report Themes and Findings

Key Questions Addressed By The Research

- Is the regular presence of police in schools necessary to keep students and staff safe?
- Does the regular presence of police in schools disrupt or undermine the goal of providing all students with a quality education?
- Is a regular police presence in schools compatible with racial equity?

“Racist Bad Cop” vs. Systemic Racism

- White civilians are more likely to be beneficiaries of policing services, while Black and Hispanic civilians are more likely to be targets of policing actions
- Black and Latinx civilians have a higher frequency of police interactions, are more likely to be subject to stop-and-frisk practices and are twice as likely as whites to experience nonlethal threats or use of force;
- Those practices do not vary significantly by the race of the officer.

School as a “Feeder” System into the Legal System

- Response to prevent school shootings has disproportionately harmful impact on youth of color
- The presence of police in schools has led to the increasing criminalization of young people, particularly young people of color, often for relatively minor transgressions that were rarely viewed as warranting law enforcement intervention in the past.

Research Themes

- The use of law enforcement to respond to student conduct is a problem in Massachusetts and across the US.
- Police misuse and abuse of power against students and youth is a problem in Massachusetts, as it is elsewhere in the country.

Research Themes

- The harms of policing in schools is not limited to “racist bad cops” but is driven by systemic factors around the role and power of policing that contribute to inequities where Black residents are more likely to be harmed by policing practices.
- School administrators use school police to respond to student conduct.

Research Themes

- Conflating the law enforcement purpose of school police with “educators”, “counselors” and “social workers” is both misleading and dangerous on two levels:
 - 1) it justifies the under-investment in funding, hiring and training of social and emotional supports for students to fulfill these roles; and
 - 2) counselors and educators are legally obligated to protect the confidentiality of students while such protections do not exist with school law enforcement.
 - 3) gives students the illusion that their conversation with law enforcement is confidential when it is not;

Research Findings

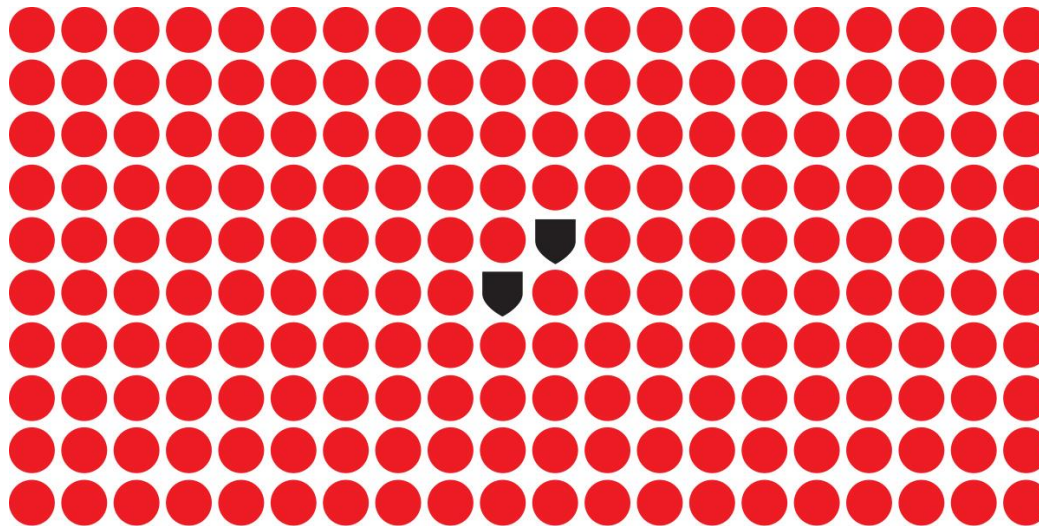
Finding #1: There is little convincing evidence that the presence of an armed police officer has much effect on school safety at all.

- A meta-analysis of 12 studies found that none “indicated a positive impact” of a police presence on school safety outcomes.

Stern, A., & Petrosino, A. (2018). *What do we know about the effects of school-based law enforcement on school safety?* San Francisco, CA: WestEd.

Research Findings

A 2018 *Washington Post* analysis of nearly 200 incidents of gun violence on campus found only two times where an SRO successfully intervened in a shooting.



In nearly 200 school shootings, police on campus successfully intervened **twice**. **#SROfail**

Scarred by School Shootings, Washington Post, March 25, 2018.

Research Findings

Finding #2: There is considerable evidence that the presence of a police officer increases school-based arrests for low-level, non-violent behaviors that have traditionally been the domain of school disciplinarians.

- In schools where a police officer is placed, low-level, non-violent behaviors are more likely to result in an arrest than in schools without police present.

Research Findings

Schools
with police
reported

3.5

times as many
arrests as schools
without police.

#SROfail



U.S. Department of Education, 2015-2016 Civil Rights
Data Collection (CRDC) data <https://www.ed.gov/officeofeducation/dataandstatistics/civilrights>

Research Findings

Finding #3: There is also considerable evidence that Black and brown students and students with disabilities are disproportionately singled out for arrests and criminal citations for relatively minor school-based offenses.

- Focus groups with SROs from 16 school districts in Massachusetts show that the line between behaviors warranting school discipline and those requiring law enforcement intervention was often blurred, and that behaviors considered “criminal” in one district or school were construed as being solely the domain of school disciplinarians in another.

Thurau, L. and Wald, J. *Controlling Partners: When Law Enforcement Meets Discipline in Public Schools*, 54 N.Y.L. Sch. L. Rev. 977 (2009-2010).

Research Findings

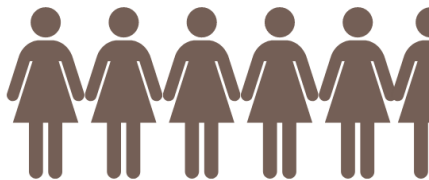
In Massachusetts, **Black** and **Latinx** students represented 27% of all students, but 64% of all arrests.



U.S. Department of Education, 2015-2016 Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) data <https://www.ed.gov/datacollection/civildata/>

Research Findings

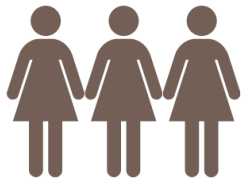
Black girls don't fare any better, when compared to white girls:



5.5 times more likely to be suspended from school



4 times more likely to be arrested in school



3 times more likely to be referred to law enforcement by school



Let Her Learn: Stopping School Pushout for Girls of Color,
National Women's Law Center, 2017.

Research Findings

Finding #4: There is a growing body of research that regular interactions with police officers both in and out of school have a harmful effect on students' academic performance. This is particularly true for Black students, who are more likely to exhibit signs of trauma as a result of these interactions.

Research Findings

ACCORDING TO AN EVALUATION OF THE
IMPACT OF FEDERAL SCHOOL POLICING
GRANTS AND EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

These grants are correlated with:

6% increase

in middle school discipline
of (mostly Black) students

2.5% decrease

in high school graduation rates

4% decrease

in college enrollment rates

#SROfail

Weisburst. E., *Patrolling Public Schools: The Impact of Funding for School Police on Student Discipline and Long-term Education Outcome*, October 2018.

Research Findings

Finding #5: The placement of police in schools can have a detrimental effect on overall school climate. This is especially true for Black and Latinx students, whose sense of safety is not increased by the presence of SROs.

Research Findings

school police placement led to:

- increased reliance on surveillance;
- more frequent illegal search and seizures;
- inappropriate sharing of confidential information;
- encouraging students to inform on each other;
- an emphasis on formal controls that create an environment of fear and distrust;

Research Findings

- reduced the perceived legitimacy of police and decreased some youths' trust of law enforcement officers;
- weakened the school's sense of community, and
- diminished students' willingness to confide in school staff when they are experiencing problems.

Gottfredson DC, Crosse S, Tang Z, et al. *Effects of school resource officers on school crime and responses to school crime*. *Criminology and Public Policy*, 19(3): 1–36 (2020).



School Policing in Massachusetts:

Panel Discussion

Panelists



Meenakshi Verma Agrawal

Co-Founder

Framingham Families for Racial
Equity in Education



Scott Edmond

Co-Founder

Framingham Families for
Racial Equity in Education

Panelist



Cassandra Bensahih

Black Families Together, Worcester

Panelist



Bill Leukhardt

parent of Lauren Rousseau

Panelist



Chanel

Young advocate with More Than Words

Panelist



Amaryllis Lopez

program director of Elevated Thought and a
cultural worker based in Lawrence



Questions and Answers: Reporters and Legislators

Asking Questions



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- Specify if the question to a particular panelist or to any speaker

Download report at
cfjj.org/policing-in-schools

Report findings:

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To contact panelists:

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