



CJCC Juvenile Justice Technical Assistance Session

Introduction

On June 12, 2019, the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC) convened a juvenile justice training and technical assistance session at One Judiciary Square to explore the theme, “Engaging Police to Address Student Conduct Issues in Schools: Current Protocols, Challenges, and Solutions.” The session included 40 local, federal, and non-governmental agency professionals responsible for advocating, adjudicating, caretaking, defending, educating, monitoring, prosecuting, and supervising system-involved youth.

The agencies represented include: the Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants (OVSJG), District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS), the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD), Office of the Attorney General (OAG), the State Board of Education/Ombudsman (SBOE), the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME), the Public Defender Service (PDS), the Department of Human Services (DHS), the Public Charter School Board (PCSB), educators from both traditional public schools (DCPS) and Public Charter Schools (PCS), the Office of the Senior Advisor (OSA), the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE), the DC Council, and several non-governmental organizations.

Mannone Butler, CJCC Executive Director, delivered opening remarks and provided information regarding arrests that occurred at DCPS, PCS, and private school addresses in the District. She noted that although a school address may be listed as the arrest location, the actual arrest could have taken place near the school and not on campus. Of the 682 juvenile arrests that occurred from September 1, 2018, to March 31, 2019, 115, or about 17%, of arrests were at addresses identified as a school campus. Director Butler also stated the predominant charges for juvenile arrests at addresses identified as a school location were simple assault and release violations (which includes custody orders). After her opening remarks, Director Butler introduced the moderator and the panelists for the first panel.



Director Butler welcomes attendees

Panel 1: The Role of Police in Schools and Protocols for Responding to School Incidents

- **Moderator:**
 - Elizabeth Wieser, Deputy Attorney General, Public Safety Division, OAG
- **Panelists:**
 - Robert Thomas, Director, Office of School Security, DCPS
 - Michael Coligan, Commander, School Safety Division, MPD
 - Donald Bridges, former President, National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO)



Panelists discuss SROs, SPOs, and contract officers in schools.

Ms. Wieser provided opening statements regarding her enthusiasm to participate on the panel and how this topic related to the Attorney General’s public safety priorities, particularly at schools and for children with abuse and neglect cases. She stated that the OAG is motivated to discuss these critical issues and identify solutions to improve the lives of children in the District. She then asked each panelist to introduce themselves.

Mr. Robert (Bob) Thomas is the Director of School Security at DCPS. He is responsible for the safety and

security of 115 public schools in the District. Director Thomas is also responsible for the more than 7,000 cameras in those schools, as well as weapons abatement equipment, and safety drills.

Commander Michael Coligan is the Commander of MPD’s School Safety Division. School Resource Officers (SROs) report to Commander Coligan and his leadership team. Commander Coligan is responsible for the daily deployment of SROs to DCPS and PCS locations.

Officer Donald (Don) Bridges is the Immediate Past President of the National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO). He mentioned that NASRO is the largest trainer of school-based officers in the nation, training roughly 2,000 officers annually. Mr. Bridges currently serves as an SRO in Baltimore County, MD.

Types of Law Enforcement Presence in Schools

Director Thomas explained that DCPS deploys both contract security officers and Special Police Officers (SPOs). SPOs are officers employed by DCPS who are armed, have the power to make arrests on school grounds, and protect schools and buildings. There are 25 SPOs who work two shifts (6:00 am to 2:00 pm, and 2:00 pm to 10:00 pm) to support SROs and contract officers. DCPS also deploys about 350 contract [security] officers across all schools. Contract officers do not have powers to arrest and cannot be off-duty police officers.

Commander Coligan explained that SROs are MPD officers who are assigned to a school cluster. MPD has about 100 SROs in primary and secondary schools throughout the city. Schools can have a combination of SROs, SPOs, and contract security officers. MPD also has other programs that utilize SROs, such as: the Officer Friendly program, where the SRO provides safety presentations for students; the Junior Police Cadets program for 5th graders; and the Safe Passage program that brings patrol officers and SROs together to prevent disputes and incidents before and after school.

Commander Coligan talked about strategic deployment of SROs. In the past, only DCPS schools were serviced by SROs since they had about 75% or 80% of the student population. Now, charter schools account for approximately half of the overall student population, so MPD assigns SROs to charter schools as well. In 2013, MPD moved away from assigning an SRO to a particular school and decided instead to assign several SROs to a cluster of schools. Under the new system, traditional public and charter schools were grouped into geographic “clusters” based on population, neighborhood crime statistics, and truancy rates. SROs remain flexible to shift their deployment based on trends. SROs tend to service the same schools within the cluster area, typically servicing both the high school and the feeder middle schools. This practice allows officers to have a continuous presence in the area and helps build relationships with

parents, educators, and students. SROs also participate in mediations, after-school activities such as football and basketball games, and summer events like “Beat the Streets” and the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP). Mediation offers an opportunity for officers to interact with parents and other community members outside of the school. Commander Coligan works to ensure that his SROs are aware of and involved in safety issues surrounding schools.

National Best Practices

Mr. Bridges stated that having strong relationships between law enforcement and school districts are paramount to the success of SROs in schools. Both parties need to be able to develop trust for one another because, without it, both parties will struggle to have a successful partnership. A key part of this relationship is ensuring that all parties understand their roles and limitations. Mr. Bridges emphasized that the role of a law enforcement officer at a school is not classroom management. Officers should not be expected to remove students from classrooms for behavioral issues. Instead, from his perspective, he stated that 90% of law enforcement work in schools should be used in a supporting role. Officers should be aware of the resources available to them, parents, and students.

An SRO assignment should be given only to officers who are interested in working in schools with students and educators. Some officers may not be best suited to work in a school setting, and each police district should establish selection criteria for the best officers to accept this duty. For example, officers who operate under the spirit of the law, instead of the letter of the law, may be better suited for these types of assignments. Once an officer is assigned to a school, the SRO should attend training on a regular basis.

Currently, there are no national best practices for charter schools.

Training

Commander Coligan stated that all SROs have training opportunities and must make a commitment to training during the application process. Only experienced MPD officers are eligible to be an SRO. Each officer is required to attend 40 hours of training specifically related to the SRO position. The topics covered during the training include conflict resolution, substance abuse, District laws regarding search and seizure, gang/crew intelligence and violence prevention, child development (including disabilities and special needs), behavior management, and active shooter drills. Many of the SROs are District natives and alumni of the schools they service, which helps them have a cultural appreciation for the school climate. The SROs are also introduced to the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) and the Department of Behavioral Health’s (DBH) Child and Adolescent Mobile Psychiatric Service (ChAMPS) social services liaisons. ChAMPS is an emergency response service for children, teenagers, and adolescent adults who are having mental health or behavioral health crises.

Director Thomas stated that SPOs undergo similar training as SROs and are required to complete annual training to renew their license.

Mr. Bridges and Commander Coligan emphasized that SROs are trained not to “over-police” and make unnecessary arrests in the schools. MPD has a formal use of force policy. For example, SROs do not traditionally carry tasers, and if so, those can be used only by a Sergeant. Last year, MPD held a refresher training with NASRO for SROs, which is considered the gold standard for SRO training. Overall, law enforcement personnel are committed to being engaged with the schools. SROs and SPOs attempt to speak to every student they encounter to create positive interactions. It is important for the students to know that officers are committed and want to be in the schools.

Typical Incidents

Commander Colligan stated that most school arrests are in response to Simple Assaults and Custody Orders. Simple Assault is a misdemeanor crime where an assault occurred without the use or presence of a weapon, and, generally, where the injuries do not require serious medical treatment, such as admission into a hospital. While a fight may be an example of Simple Assault, not all school fights result in an arrest. Officers usually try to speak with all parties involved in physical altercations while on the scene to mediate and resolve the underlying issue. Group brawls and gang-related fights or assaults are typically the ones that result in an arrest. For less severe simple assaults, MPD will divert the youth to the Department of Human Services' Alternatives to the Court Experience (ACE) program.

A custody order is essentially a juvenile warrant, which requires the juvenile to reappear before the court, typically because the juvenile has failed to appear at a court hearing and/or has violated the terms of their release. Officers have the discretion to arrest a student who has an existing custody order inside or outside school. If a custody order is executed inside the school, the officers try their best to be discreet, such as have school officials call the student to the front office, where the arrest is then made, as opposed to making the arrest in the classroom in front of the student's peers.

Law enforcement personnel who work in schools also deal with additional types of offenses, including robbery.

There is an agreement amongst law enforcement and school administrators that behavioral and disciplinary issues should be handled by the school. However, more serious offenses such as fights, and disputes receive more attention by law enforcement. DCPS schools have weapons-abatement, drug, and other contraband policies. In instances where a criminal offense has occurred, MPD will consult with the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) first before acting.

There are no data regarding the types of individuals who are calling the police to address issues at schools. Based on his experience, Commander Colligan stated that they receive a lot of from contract officers and principals, and occasionally teachers in the classroom.

Most arrests take place at secondary schools. In the past, MPD would receive calls from elementary schools for youth experiencing a mental health crisis, but the schools are doing better at addressing these crises internally. After conversations with teachers and school administrators, there has been a noticeable decrease in calls from teachers in the classroom.

What Works Well in the District

Director Thomas and Commander Colligan agreed that DCPS and MPD work well together to share information and communicate regularly among SROs, educators, and school administrators. They share information regarding social media tips and other intelligence to help prevent incidents, or at least be better prepared to respond and strategically deploy resources.

Challenges in the District

Some notable challenges expressed by the panelists and audience members were the lack of parental involvement, limited security-related planning prior to the start of the school year, and funding. Director Thomas would like to see the school system have a more static annual budget focused on security. The schools have old equipment that needs refurbishing, maintenance, and replacements. Educators in the audience mentioned that they would like to communicate more frequently with law enforcement

throughout the school year to serve as a pulse check to share feedback, strategize, and readjust practices as needed.

Law Enforcement Solutions Before Next School Year

Mr. Bridges suggested that law enforcement officers sit down with school officials prior to the beginning of the next school year to review practices, policies, and strategies. During this “pregame huddle,” the different parties could cover expectations and discuss in detail the level of law enforcement visibility on campus.

Panel 2: How Schools Address Student Conduct Issues and Factors that Lead to Police Involvement

- **Moderator:**
 - Mannone Butler, Executive Director, CJCC
- **Panelists:**
 - Tanya Roane, Principal, Cardozo Education Campus, (High School and Middle School) DCPS
 - Kortni Stafford, Principal, Kelly Miller Middle School, DCPS
 - Andre Williams, Dean, Charles Hart Middle School, DCPS
 - Adam Lustig, Manager, Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), DCPS
 - Jiselle O’Neal, Senior Specialist, Intergovernmental Relations and School Support, PCSB



Educators discuss law enforcement and discipline in their schools.

Director Butler introduced herself as the moderator for the second panel and asked the panelists to make their own introductions.

Ms. Tanya Roane is the Principal of the Cardozo Education Campus. She will be transferring at the end of this semester to become the new principal of the DCPS school at the Youth Services Center.

Ms. Kortni Stafford is the Principal of Kelly Miller Middle School.

Mr. Andre Williams is the Dean of Students at Charles Hart Middle School. Mr. Williams will serve as the summer school principal for middle school, which will be located at Hart and include middle school students from across the District.

Mr. Adam Lustig is a Program Manager in the Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) division at DCPS central office.

Ms. Jiselle O’Neal is a Senior Specialist of Intergovernmental Relations and School Support with the Public Charter School Board.

Conduct Issues at Schools

Schools experience a range of conduct and behavioral issues with their students. The panelists provided insight into the variety, severity, and uniqueness of the problems they encounter. Each school is implementing alternative interventions to address these issues and aim to deploy SROs, SPOs, and contract officers only in situations that warrant an elevated response.

Both charters and traditional public schools deal with the potential for a student to student assault, a student to teacher assault, truancy, and bullying issues. Principal Stafford, at Kelly Miller, requires students to turn in their cell phones during the day to minimize conflicts born from social media disputes or bullying. Principal Roane talked about the changing demographics of her school, Cardozo. In recent years, the school has seen an increase in MS-13 and 18th Street gang activity. She and her staff remain vigilant and aware of the students who travel from different neighborhoods to attend schools, paying attention to neighborhood rivalries or “beefs.”

Factors that Lead to Law Enforcement involvement at Schools

Panelists stated that there is no formal guidance as to when to request law enforcement intervention. Educators tend to call SROs to assist with physical altercations; a student’s refusal to leave the building after a suspension or expulsion; parents who threaten violence against students, educators or other parents; and to build positive relationships between students and officers. The panelists also invite SROs to school events and other functions to increase their visibility and allow the SROs to develop positive relationships with their students through structured engagement.

Alternatives to Law Enforcement Interventions

The panelists from both school systems reported various programs and organizations that they work with to decrease their reliance on law enforcement intervention. Mr. Williams talked about the Roving Leaders program and its benefits. The Roving Leaders Program is traditionally a community-based program, but as the Dean of Students, he has worked to implement aspects of this program in his school. The aim of the program is to prevent, neutralize, and control hostile behaviors in youth and youth groups through the development of positive relationships between students and outreach workers. Staff at his school and volunteers serve as the outreach workers. Mr. Williams works with his Roving Leaders and MPD’s gang intelligence task force to prepare and address conflicts without having to rely heavily on SROs.

Principal Stafford mentioned her school’s close relationship with the Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) and their service providers. DBH’s Prevention and Early Intervention Division provides school-based, primary prevention services to students and school staff and consultation to schools, principals, teachers, and classrooms on early intervention and treatment to students and parents.

Mr. Lustig highlighted the increase in referrals to his SEL team. Social workers can make referrals for students and their families to receive support and services with DBH technicians and other similarly suited nongovernmental organizations. Principal Roane stated that Cardozo has eight social workers, and the school also has strong relationships with nonprofit organizations like the Latin American Youth Center (LAYC), SchoolTalk/Restorative DC, and City Year. Some charter schools partner with the Office of Human Rights to address bullying.

Mr. Lustig stated that DCPS has been working to incorporate Restorative Justice and other practices to enhance the overall school climate and to avoid and address conflicts. He acknowledged that some schools have been reluctant to embrace Restorative Justice practices. There has, however, been an

increased effort for schools to implement restorative justice practices due to the passage of legislation that limits suspensions.¹ DCPS also offers crisis de-escalation training, which has also helped staff members recognize students' triggers and become more conscious of their own behaviors, biases, and actions. Ms. O'Neal credited prevention, trauma-informed care, and building strong relationships between students and staff as an effective alternative to law enforcement intervention.

Challenges in the District

Panelists stated that there are no policies that govern the interactions among students, law enforcement personnel, and educators. Mr. Lustig also shared that DCPS does not have a student code of conduct, but Chapter 25 of the D.C. Code and DC Municipal Regulations (DCMR) provides guidance on conduct issues and appropriate responses based on the severity of behavior, where suspension or expulsion is a last resort. Although the regulations outline five tiers of behaviors and provides allowable disciplinary responses, educators are still seeking a revision to give school leaders more autonomy in taking disciplinary actions. The DCMR does not contain any guidance surrounding SRO interventions. Ms. O'Neal noted that charter schools are similar in this respect as there is no centralized or formal guidance or policy for engaging with law enforcement.

Regarding the challenges that schools have with SROs, both systems reported that there is a lack of understanding of law enforcement's roles and responsibilities. Ms. O'Neal stated that some educators have a fear of calling MPD. Some educators are aware of the legal implications that a student may face if they are arrested and charged with an offense, and they do not want to contribute to the student facing such consequences. Principal Stafford stated that calling MPD to address issues in schools can erode the trust between students and educators. An educator from the audience shared their concern that SROs are not always available. They mentioned that SROs are not available until after MPD's roll call and shift briefings, which presents a challenge in the morning and before school dismissal.

Solutions before the next school year

Principal Roane said that when a teacher has excellent classroom management skills, they are less likely to rely on outside actors, such as law enforcement or school administrators, to address student conduct issues. Principal Stafford agreed and expanded that having relationships with students is the foundation of classroom management. Both agreed to work with teachers to decrease any reliance on deploying SROs for classroom management issues. Mr. Williams stated he will be providing his teachers and volunteers with a "cheat sheet" and checklists to help them understand their response options to certain behaviors and conduct issues during the summer. Ms. O'Neal will encourage educators to have morning check-ins with themselves and with students to gain a greater appreciation of obstacles they may have experienced before the start of the school day. Mr. Lustig said he would like to improve communication among schools, law enforcement, DBH, and parents. He felt that parents were often unaware of available programs for their families or the role of law enforcement in schools. The panelists then offered additional solutions summarized below:

¹ The Student Fair Access to School Amendment Act mandated the local education agencies adopt, in consultation with school personnel, students, and parents, school discipline policies to promote the safety and well-being of students and staff. A key component of this requirement is the use of "School-related arrest". School personnel must consider first if a student's behavior can be safely and appropriately handled through other disciplinary actions before involving law enforcement or seeking school-related arrests in response to student behavior.

- SROs should make a concerted effort to build positive relationships with students, school staff, as well as parents
- schools should communicate with parents about how certain conduct issues (e.g., bullying and fights) will be addressed, including whether law enforcement could become involved
- teachers and SROs should be trained in trauma-informed responses
- conduct regular meetings between SROs and school administrators to foster strong relationships
- SROs should explain their philosophy to schools regarding their role and involvement in different types of incidents
- SROs should participate in teacher orientation the week before school starts to explain their role and field any questions from school staff
- SROs, administrators and teachers should run through various scenarios and discuss each other’s roles and responsibilities
- Restorative Justice practices should be applied proactively (especially in anticipation of an adverse event) as opposed to always being reactive

Solution Circle Discussion

Each of the participants joined one of six groups to take part in an exercise to highlight strengths and challenges with respect to law enforcement engagement at schools, and to identify proposed solutions to the challenges. CJCC staff asked their table participants to identify what was going well with respect to law enforcement engagement at schools (strengths) and challenges. All strengths and challenges identified by the solution circle participants were distilled into four categories. The categories consisted of “communication,” “alternatives to law enforcement interventions,” “deployment of law enforcement officers in schools,” and “training.” Strengths were that schools actively sought alternatives to address conduct issues without involving law enforcement, and educators were able to work with law enforcement personnel in their schools. For challenges, comments from participants described a lack of communication and understanding of law enforcement roles within the schools.

Category	Strengths	Challenges
Communication	Communication and information sharing with all relevant parties (MPD, Schools and Parents)	Lack of materials and effort to educate parents, educators and students on the role of law enforcement in schools
	Improved relationships between students and the law enforcement community	Students do not recognize law enforcement officers as individuals
		Lack of best practices or guidance for effective communication between MPD, Schools, Students, and Parents
		Poor vertical communication among Parents, MPD and Schools

Category	Strengths	Challenges
Alternatives to Law Enforcement Interventions	Increased use and willingness to implement alternatives to arrests and suspensions (restorative justice practices, wrap-around services, and trauma informed approaches)	Limited number of resources, or knowledge of resources, to address student conduct issues
	Law Enforcement Officers are working to build relationships with students to encourage positive behaviors	Teachers are unaware of their rights in the classrooms and are limited in their ability to provide an appropriate response, which causes them to rely on law enforcement
	Law Enforcement Officers contact OAG before executing a custody order and removing youth from school	
Deployment of Law Enforcement in schools	Students are exposed to at least one assigned officer within an area cluster, allowing them to build rapport	The placement of officers at an area cluster as opposed to a specific school
	Some Law Enforcement Officers engage with parents and other parental groups associated with their schools	Lack of trust between students and law enforcement officers
	Law Enforcement Officers have shown interest in engaging with students during school and outside traditional school hours (afterschool programs, “Side by Side” band, cadet programs, etc.)	Lack of understanding of when educators should call law enforcement
	Law Enforcement Officers have increased their communication with behavioral support agencies and organizations	Funding to deploy officers in schools takes away dollars for alternative resources for students
	Law Enforcement Officers support school activities	Law Enforcement Officers respond differently to situations and lack a uniform application
	Follow-up and feedback loop after incidents	Students perceive law enforcement responses as unfair
Training	Law Enforcement Officers receive training	Law Enforcement Officers should receive more training on cultural competency
		No fidelity component in the training SROs receive

Category	Strengths	Challenges
		Training for law enforcement to work better with students who experienced trauma or have cognitive disabilities is limited

After each group discussed some of the strengths and challenges, they were asked to develop solutions that could address those challenges and improve law enforcement engagement in DC schools before the next school year. Each group voted for one solution to report out to the broader audience. After each group reported out on their top-ranked solution, the entire room was asked to use Options Finder to rank the proposed solutions. The results were as followed:

Ranked Order	Proposed Solution
1	Clear standardization on how schools and SROs work with youth and each other
2	Understanding trauma and making connections in school and in the home (addressing multi-generational behavioral health)
3	All police officers should receive SRO/SPO training
4	Smaller group convening to have a dialogue about resource allocation to SROs
5	Training MPD staff and returning to the Officer Friendly model

Recommendations

Based on the responses from the solution circles, and general discussion during the TA Session, the CJCC recommends the following:

1. CJCC to convene a follow-up meeting with DCPS, PCSB, and MPD’s leadership to discuss the summary of this technical assistance session and provide recommendations to address challenges before the start of the school year 2019-2020 (SY19-20).
2. MPD, DCPS, and PCSB should develop a guidance document that establishes the expectation for SRO intervention, SPO intervention, Contract Officer intervention, as well as standard operating procedures for law enforcement in school.
3. DCPS and PCSB to provide law enforcement officers, educators and school administration with contact information for programs, resources, or organizations that provide alternatives to addressing disciplinary issues.
4. MPD, DCPS, and PCSB should schedule a school kick-off meeting and quarterly check-in meetings (See Recommendation #6) with cluster area leadership during SY19-20. These meetings should be used to create, discuss, and revise law enforcement engagement and educators’ action plans to address conduct issues.
5. OSSE should make all trauma-related, restorative justice, and “alternatives to punishment” trainings or TA sessions accessible to SROs and SPOs. MPD should mandate that all SROs attend all related training held by OSSE. DCPS should mandate that all SPOs attend all related training held by OSSE.
6. All law enforcement personnel should be included in schools’ “staff development training days.” This will allow educators to have conversations with law enforcement personnel while no students are present. It will also serve as a check-in between educators and law enforcement personnel during the school year.