



Appendix A to Report 21-049

POLICY AND PRACTICE REVIEW OF POLICE INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOLS

Ottawa-Carleton District School Board

Office of the Human Rights and Equity Advisor

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF ALGONQUIN TERRITORY AND THE ALGONQUIN PEOPLE

This review took place on the unceded and unsundered territory of the Algonquin People. This territory has been home to the Algonquin People since time immemorial. It is on this territory that OCDSB students, families and staff are living and learning. We are grateful to be present on Algonquin land.

The voices of the Algonquin People must be centred on their territory, together with the multitude of voices of other First Nations, Métis and Inuit children and families who are living and learning here and call this land home. Through this review, the OCDSB asked Indigenous students, families, staff and communities to come forward and share their truth; their truth about the education system and their truth about the police. These truths are tied to legacies of trauma inflicted by colonialism, the residential school system and the failure to prioritize and protect missing and murdered women, girls and two-spirit people. Recognizing and honouring this truth is important to find the good path forward toward reconciliation.

“Anywhere and everywhere, in all domains where human beings interact to bring about something of peace and solitude, there needs to be real trust alive and well in the hearts of the people, if good is the expected outcome.” Algonquin Elder

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

2SLGBTQ+	Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer and Questioning
BIPOC	Black, Indigenous and People of Colour
BMS	Behaviour Management Systems
EA	Educational Assistant
ELD	English Language Developers
GHS	Gloucester High School
HWDSB	Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board
IEAC	Indigenous Education Advisory Council
KII	Key Informant Interview
MFIPPA	<i>Municipal Freedom of Information and Privacy Protection Act</i>
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
OCDSB	Ottawa-Carleton District School Board
OCISO	Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization
OPS	Ottawa Police Service
PD	Professional Development
PDSB	Peel District School Board
PHIPPA	<i>Personal Health Information Protection Act</i>
POC	People of Colour
PTSD	Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
RHS	Ridgemont High School
SOI	Superintendent of Instruction
SRO	School Resource Officer
TDSB	Toronto District School Board
TERT	Tragic Event Response Team
UGDSB	Upper Grand District School Board
UPHS	Urban and Priority High Schools
VTRA	Violence/Threat Risk Assessment
YCJA	<i>Youth Criminal Justice Act</i>

“We hope that the voices and opinions of those families and communities that experience the most systemic exclusions and are made the most vulnerable by the racism, homophobia, classism, misogyny, and ableism of our society are prioritized over those who have the privilege of being made safe by police. It is the latter who are always the loudest, and so we hope you listen closely to those with the least capacity or resources to take up space.” 2SLGBTQ+ Family

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY¹

Scope of the review. In September 2020 the Board of Trustees passed a [motion](#) mandating a review of the [Police Involvement in Schools](#) Policy. The [consultation plan](#) for the policy review was approved in October 2020. This included a review of the School Resource Officer (SRO) role in schools as well as a human rights-based review of all activities that involve police in schools that are identified as legally discretionary.

In total 28 small group discussions were held, with 424 participants. 32 key informant interviews were conducted and 25 written submissions received and reviewed. Over 3100 people participated in the survey for students, parents and community members.

Experiences. Across the consultations, courageous and candid experiences were heard from students, parents, community members and employees regarding their interaction with police in schools and their observations about how the OCDSB is using police in schools. The impact of these experiences ranged from positive encounters to lasting physical and psychological harms that were distinctly linked to Indigeneity, race, class, gender, and ability. In all of the consultations it was made clear that those most negatively impacted by OCDSB’s practices of involving police in school need to be prioritized in proposed solutions and in outcomes. Each consultation highlighted vivid examples where this policy has worsened the relationships of various stakeholders – students, parents, and members of the wider community – with the police. It was evident that the communities that engaged in this process are mindful of the social and political context of the Ottawa region and the wider world. Many participants vocalized and shared through online discussion that the events happening in the region cannot be separated from world events when speaking about police involvement in schools. In particular, participants pointed to the violence perpetrated by police against Indigenous and Black people in the US, in Canada and in Ottawa when discussing OCDSB policy.

Participants shared with vivid honesty stories of being negatively impacted by their encounters with police. Thus, it is important to consider the ongoing and historical role that systemic racism plays within the context of education and policing. Community members took risks to share their experiences, and in some instances, they had to re-live painful moments as part of this consultation process. The review team is thankful for all the individuals who courageously shared their lived experiences.

“As a mom of a special needs child, I know that some people believe that the mainstreaming of children with Autism makes necessary the presence of police in schools, due to the inevitable meltdowns these children experience. Police are, however, not experts or even properly trained in the de-escalation of special needs children. I can only imagine the good that would be done if the funding was instead spent on EAs or behaviour specialists.” Parent

¹ The executive summary was written by Denney Resources Inc with slight modifications.

Safety. Safety emerged as a consistent theme throughout the range of dialogues held. At the inception of the SRO program, increased police involvement within schools and educational spaces was assumed to lead to improved safety. This assumption, and the understanding of safety it rests upon, have since been challenged. Other considerations, such as psychological, physical, and emotional safety, particularly for Indigenous, Black, and marginalized² communities were raised in criticisms of the assumed connection between police presence and overall safety. Throughout the consultation process, 2SLGBTQ+ people and people who experience barriers related to their abilities also voiced this broader understanding of safety.

No singular definition of safety was established during the consultations. But it was clear that one's experience of safety in relation to police involvement in schools is deeply rooted in Indigeneity, race, sexual orientation, gender identity, and ability.

Safety for whom? Safety for whom? was a recurring question that community members implored us to consider. Consultation participants were diverse in terms of socio-economic standing, ancestry, racial and ethnic background, and sexual orientation and gender identity. The majority of community members spoke to their intersectional identities and the correlation between these identities and their experiences of police involvement in schools. The diversity of participants resulted in a range of perspectives being shared regarding the impacts that police presence can have in the school and learning environment.

"I want to have my rights as a parent to be respected. Having a police officer in school reinforces the idea that white students need to be protected from racialized students." Parent

"There are two schools on the same street but although they were so close they were different in nature because of the demographic. One is predominantly white and the other is predominantly of colour. I always see 3, 4 or 5 cop cars parked outside of the school that is predominantly of colour. What kind of image does that create? Especially when other students see it. It feeds the stigma that people are always getting in trouble... It's supposed to be an educational environment." Black Student

Geographic location has an influence on the level of exposure communities have to SROs. The influence of geographic location was exemplified by the experiences of students and families living in the Ridgemont and Gloucester school areas. At the primary and high schools serving these regions there is a 1:4.5 SRO to school ratio. At other schools in the Ottawa region, the ratio is 1:17.

Compared to their suburban counterparts, communities impacted by poverty and those in urban city centres have increased exposure to police officers in schools. Many participants expressed concerns regarding the allocation of resources, and the intersections of Indigeneity, race, class, and ability were reflected in many of the experiences they shared.

"I have been a teacher for 20 years - 18 years with the OCDSB at the elementary level in a middle-class neighbourhood. The SRO would come in and talk about safe ways to cross the street, etc. The longest-serving SRO was Black (eight

² "Marginalized" is used throughout this report to refer to identities that are racialized, 2SLGBTQ+ and include people with disabilities.

years). I did not see much of the SRO who was being deployed elsewhere. Seems they are being sent to places with behaviour problems. Schools should do a better job dealing with behaviour, particularly in low-income areas. Students with autism have a medical problem. Suburbia sees school as a hub for community. Hub for where services come together.” Parent

Psychological safety. Students shared experiences of having police cars constantly parked outside of Gloucester, Ridgemont and Woodroffe High Schools. Students spoke about the psychological impacts of feeling “watched” and the negative effects this has on their ability to feel a deeper sense of belonging in the school community. Participants also suggested that constant armed police presence affected their academic performance and reduced their sense of psychological safety, in particular for Indigenous, Black and racialized students.

“When students see who cops are when George Floyd was killed by police, we can’t expect students to feel safe when they walk into school and see police officers there - especially from the perspective of people who think that police should make it a safer environment, because police are supposed to represent safety, but the reality is that for racialized students police represent violence and harm and punishment, so we can’t expect racialized students to feel safe in the classroom because they are going to be vigilant about the fact that there are police in the building or in the class beside them or in the hallway, and this will impact them in negative ways when they are only supposed to be feeling positive things in an educational environment.” Student

Over policing. Over policing emerged as a theme within the consultations, especially amongst racialized populations. In both the student and community dialogues we repeatedly heard participants speak of the hyper-surveillance that occurs both within schools and in the wider community and the role this plays within the school environment. Participants reacted strongly to the constant presence of armed police officers in schools. We heard from current and former students that the administrative staff would routinely threaten students with police intervention for minor infractions or benign behaviours. Some of these situations occurred as students were simply waiting indoors out of the cold before leaving the school during the winter months. Students (former and current) described the double standard that Black students experienced as compared to their white counterparts. Students spoke to us candidly about the limitations placed on them when racialized communities are treated as threats and how there are minimal opportunities to escape these narratives. Many students felt as though there is no escape from police presence and interventions because they are heavily policed at school and within their communities. They asked, where are the spaces where kids can just be kids, with space to learn and grow without the looming threat of violence?

“Why are we so afraid of 14-17 year olds? They aren’t that scary.” Student

Participants shared how teachers and administrators routinely “adultified” and pathologized Black girls attending high schools. These girls are not treated as students on a learning journey but rather as adults requiring disproportionate surveillance. These biases were linked to higher suspension rates and the educational streaming that Indigenous, Black and racialized students experience. Participants in both the student dialogues and community forums argued that there is a direct correlation between these trends and pushing children out of school and into a trajectory that risks leading to prison (the “school-to-prison” pipeline).

“Police cars are almost always sitting outside of the school.” Student

“Firstly, I would like to start with how it makes me feel targeted, like, because I am a person of colour, I am supposed to mess up. Also, as I walk in the hallway and see officers it makes me feel uncomfortable, especially now with all that is happening in our city with Ottawa Police. I personally, do not trust the police, due to the distrust that currently exists within our community.” Racialized Student

Process. Many families described biases and double standards they faced when engaging with the school system. Some families spoke about not being informed when the school contacted police about their children. Many families, especially newcomers to Canada, felt as though there were no alternative ways to advocate for their children, given their status as immigrants or refugees. Parents shared their experiences of seeing their children bullied at school as a result of racism, but they were never followed up with or given a sense that the perpetrators were held accountable. At the same time, parents related that when racialized students reacted to racist abuse, they were suspended or even expelled.

Transparency. Many participants expressed that there is a lack of transparency regarding the process of police involvement in schools. Although notices about the consultations were posted on the OCDSB website, many families who attended the consultations felt that they were not given sufficient background about the process. For instance, participants had many questions regarding definitions of terms such as “gangs” and discretionary interventions. Many participants spoke to the implicit and explicit biases that are present when teachers, administrators, and police engage with racialized communities and with people living with disabilities. Many families are not engaged in interventions and feel like they are consulted as an afterthought. Many families feel they are not fully informed as to the process when police are called and how discretion is applied. For instance, parents reported that they were not contacted when their child was in police custody within the school. Each of these shortcomings act to create distrust towards the OCDSB and the police.

“I have two kids in OCDSB. My son was involved in a couple of incidents at school involving allegations of bullying. The SRO was never involved in any of this. The principal threatened my son with the police coming to the house. The principal told me that the police will be notified and to expect a visit from the police at my home. There was no sharing of prevention strategies. It was a threat from the principal.” Parent

“It is very much according to administrative discretion and what they deem appropriate. This is a huge problem because teachers are overwhelmingly calling SROs on Black and other racialized students and are complicit in this issue of disproportionate impact. Same goes for disabled students.” Community Member

Recommendations heard. There was an unwavering recommendation running through students and community discussion sessions to immediately stop and discontinue OCDSB participation in the School Resource Officer program. Across every consultation session a large proportion of students, parents, community members and some staff members of all identities were clear that this program needs to be discontinued. Many questioned the reasons given by the OCDSB for not suspending the program while this review was underway.

Participants noted that criticisms have been raised both internationally and domestically about the impacts of police in schools. In 2014, for instance, the United Nations Human Rights Committee expressed concern about trends in American schools towards the criminalization of students in response to disciplinary problems. Similarly, some participants highlighted other Canadian jurisdictions' decisions to terminate SRO programs. An SRO program in Canada's largest school board, in Toronto, ended late in 2017, and programs in Peel and Hamilton ended in 2020 with the program in Kitchener-Waterloo being put on hold pending a review. Upper Grand ended their program in 2021. These programs were heavily criticized for their impacts on racialized students.

There were many recommendations that called for the OCDSB to look at non-punitive approaches towards addressing conflict in schools. This does not mean there shouldn't be measures in place to ensure accountability. However, models that are centred on healing and restorative practices should be explored when considering methods to ensure collective accountability. Participants recommended that the school board must consider critical race theory when attempting to rebuild a transparent accountability structure that works for everyone. The students who participated in the consultation process shared their concerns about feeling like their voices will not be heard, and even questioned whether the board will listen to their voices if they were given a chance to express themselves. They were resolute in their assertion that their criminalization continues when increased police presence means they are surveilled in the corridors of their schools.

"We have to stop prioritizing the good experiences over the violence experienced by others." Participant

"Law enforcement needs reform. We already know there are serious shortfalls in dealing with issues like mental illness and drug abuse. So why are we inviting them into our schools to regulate our children's behaviour? Don't our children deserve the best? How is it somehow their responsibility to help reform law enforcement?" Participant

Conclusion. During the consultation process we heard from many community members who were deeply impacted by police intervention in OCDSB schools. Their experiences clearly indicate that people who have been pushed to the margins in society (e.g., Indigenous, Black, 2SLGBTQ+ and people with disabilities) continue to be severely impacted by police presence in educational settings. For some participants, the consultations changed their understanding of the program. There were community members who entered the consultations believing that the SRO program needed simply to be adjusted, but once they heard the voices of current and former students and family members who were negatively impacted by the presence of police in schools, they too supported termination of the SRO program. There was wide support from people of all identities in the group discussions for the removal of police presence from schools.

Participants related experiences that were unequivocally rooted in systemic racism, specifically anti-Indigenous and anti-Black racism. These experiences involved psychological harm, physical and verbal violence, and surveillance, which ultimately had catastrophic impacts on the physiological and physical wellbeing of Indigenous and Black students and their families. The systemic violence that is experienced in community settings is transferred into school spaces when police engage with Indigenous, Black, 2SLGBTQ+ and students living with disabilities. The experiences of trauma are not removed or isolated because the environment has changed from community to school. Having armed police officers in schools has the potential to impact

the well-being and development of all youth, but racialized youth are particularly susceptible to negative impacts given the long-term and widespread problem of systemic racism.

The right to education is a fundamental right of every child. Realizing that right for every child, is the core business of the OCDSB. This means that OCDSB bears the duty to take proactive steps to remove barriers to ensure that every child has the equal opportunity to access their education without discrimination. It is clear from the information that came forward during the review, that the current practice of involving police in schools is creating barriers for some Indigenous, Black and marginalized students that prevent them from fully enjoying their right to education without discrimination. It is evident that the way OCDSB is currently using police to regulate behaviour of children in school is disproportionately impacting on children with disabilities and who are Indigenous, racialized and 2SLGBTQ+. It is also evident that the inclusion of the police in the school community is creating barriers to the educational success of some Indigenous, Black and marginalized students who do not feel safe in the schools as a result. Administrators and educators enjoy a special relationship with their students that the law recognizes as being in *“loco parentis”*. This relationship obligates them to act the way a careful and prudent parent would, in the best interests of the particular child, not simply the majority.

A rights-based approach to education requires the OCDSB to make fundamental changes to remove these barriers. The roadmap for achieving this is set out in the international human rights instruments that should act as a compass for OCDSB practice. The OCDSB should centre Indigenous rights, human rights and children's rights as it navigates changes to respond to concerns highlighted. Every child has the right to participate in decision making that impacts on them, to have their voice heard and be given due weight in accordance with their development. Every child has the right to have their own best interests centred in decision making about them. Children in the district have spoken and shared their perspectives and the OCDSB should centre these voices as it charts a new direction forward.

Changes need to be made to limit police engagement in schools, create monitoring and accountability mechanisms for when police do need to be involved and to re-centre the engagement, welcoming and success of all students in the school setting.

The generosity and hope expressed by the communities and those who came together to share their dreams of what the OCDSB could look like showed opportunity for the way forward. They shared many different tools, resources, and approaches to provide improved support for students and teachers. The energy for positive change is driven and led by the community and these consultations reveal a prime opportunity to build on the energies coursing through Ottawa-area communities.

Recommendation 1: That the OCDSB end its participation in the School Resource Officer Program.

Recommendation 2: That the OCDSB revise and harmonize all relevant contractual commitments, policies and procedures to limit police involvement at schools to necessary involvement, introduce accountability and transparency mechanisms for all police involvement and embed Indigenous rights, human rights and children's rights and survivor-centred practices.

INTRODUCTION

Scope of the review

In September 2020 the Board of Trustees passed a [motion](#) mandating a review of the [Police Involvement in Schools](#) Policy. The [consultation plan](#) for the policy review was approved in October 2020. This included a review of the School Resource Officer (SRO) role in schools as well as a human rights-based review of all activities that involve police in schools that are identified as legally discretionary.

This review was undertaken by the Office of the Human Rights and Equity Advisor at the OCDSB.³ The Human Rights and Equity Advisor is an arm's-length role that is mandated by the Ministry of Education to identify and make recommendations to address systemically-based human rights and equity issues and to increase the OCDSB capacity to ensure compliance with its obligations under the Ontario *Human Rights Code*.

The review is under the purview of the Superintendent for Safe and Accepting Schools with the technical implementation led by the Human Rights and Equity Advisor. The design and implementation of the review was guided by a steering group composed of students, parents and community groups representing diverse lived experiences. The steering group also included representatives who were put forward by the Indigenous Education Advisory Council, the Advisory Committee on Equity and the Special Education Advisory Committee. The terms of reference were shared with the Indigenous Education team, the equity team at OCDSB as well as with administrators at the two high schools with priority SRO programs and they were asked to recommend students or parents who met the criteria and may be interested in participating. Efforts were made to balance student and adult voices at the table.

The Superintendent of Instruction coordinated the steering group meetings. The steering group was an informal mechanism and not a formal committee. Its role included providing input into resources to be reviewed, groups to be consulted, the development of questions to guide the group discussions and the survey tool, and being consulted on the interpretation of the results, recommendations and development of the revised policy.

The terms of reference for the steering group are attached as **Appendix 1**.

The review report outlines concerns heard, identifies how these concerns impact on human rights and makes suggestions for the way forward.

Mandatory and legally discretionary police notification

The mandate of this review from the Board of Trustees is to look at all actions and commitments that are *legally discretionary*. The Provincial Model for a Local Police/School Board Protocol (Provincial Protocol)⁴ sets the legal standard for which incidents *must* be reported to the police by the school board. All other incidents and types of police involvement are legally discretionary,

³ See https://ocdsb.ca/about_us/human_rights_and_equity_advisor#:~:text=Established%20in%20the%20spring%20of.and%20the%20broader%20school%20community. Accessed on June 2, 2021

⁴ The Provincial Model for a Local Police/School Board Protocol (Provincial Protocol), Ministry of Education, 2015

and are the subject of this review. Under the OCDSB procedures, the principal in consultation with the superintendent has the responsibility for reporting mandatory incidents to the police.⁵

Incidents that require mandatory police notification are set out in the Provincial Protocol and are listed in the table below. Any other involvement of police in schools is *legally discretionary*, even though it may be identified as mandatory in either the Ottawa Protocol or OCDSB policies and procedures. The Ottawa Protocol and the OCDSB police involvement policies and procedures have created a more expansive list of incidents requiring mandatory police notification than the list in the Provincial Protocol. A number of other OCDSB policies and procedures also reference police involvement. A comprehensive table identifying all OCDSB policies and procedures that reference police involvement can be found at **Appendix 2**. This will be analyzed in more detail later in the report.

Table 1: Incidents requiring mandatory police notification under the Provincial Protocol

Incidents Requiring Mandatory Police Notification		
all deaths	criminal harassment	gang-related occurrences
physical assault causing bodily harm requiring treatment by a medical practitioner	possessing a weapon, including possessing a firearm	non-consensual sharing of intimate images
using a weapon to cause or to threaten bodily harm to another person	relationship-based violence	hate and/or bias-motivated occurrences
robbery	Sexual assault	extortion
trafficking in weapons or in illegal drugs	possessing an illegal drug	bomb threats

The Provincial Protocol notes one exception to the requirement to notify police for the incidents listed above. If the incident involves a child under 12 years of age, the principal may use their discretion about whether or not to notify the police. Therefore, involvement of police in responding to incidents involving children under 12 is *always* legally discretionary, even if the incident is on the list requiring mandatory notification.

Human rights-based approach to review

A human rights-based approach was used to guide this review. A human rights-based approach has three fundamental principles: participation and inclusion, non-discrimination, and transparency and accountability. It recognizes that policies and practices can often have unintended adverse impacts on marginalized communities, resulting in them experiencing systemic discrimination. Using a human rights-based approach, opportunities were created to allow for students, staff and community members of all identities to share their perspectives and

⁵ Note: The Provincial Protocol refers to mandatory notification. The OCDSB policies and procedures use the terms critical incidents and violent incidents and these types of incidents require mandatory reporting to the police. For simplicity, this report will refer to incidents that the Provincial Protocol says must be reported to the police as “mandatory”, everything else is legally discretionary.

experiences. Experiences and perspectives shared were disaggregated by race, sexuality and gender, and disability. This helps to highlight the experiences of identities that are often marginalized and most impacted by discipline and police engagement and create space for their lived experiences to be recognized. A human rights-based approach does not use a “majority rules” approach. Rather, by highlighting the experience of marginalized communities who are often most impacted by police involvement, the review ensured that all students’ experiences, safety and well-being were prioritized and acted upon, not just the experiences of the majority.

Information collection

Information for the review was collected through group discussions, one-on-one interviews, surveys and written submissions. Group discussions were held with students, parents/guardians and community members, employees, administrators and SROs at the OPS. Confidential one-on-one interviews were also held with students, parents/guardians and community members, employees, administrators and the Staff Sergeant overseeing the Youth Intervention and Division Unit. An anonymous public survey was launched for students, parents/guardians and community members and was available in English, French, Somali and Arabic languages. Over 3100 people participated in the survey. A summary of the results of the public survey can be accessed [here](#). A separate anonymous internal survey was also completed by administrators at OCDSB. The results are discussed throughout this report.

In an effort to create safer spaces for discussion and to better understand impacts on different people based on their lived experiences, small group discussions were held for Indigenous, Black, Somali-speaking (translation provided by OCISO⁶ multicultural liaison officers), Arabic-speaking (translation provided by OCISO multicultural liaison officers), racialized, 2SLGBTQ+ and disability groups. General discussions forums were also offered that were not identity-based. Within these general forums, participants were invited to self-select into smaller discussion groups that were identity-based and then perspectives discussed in each of the small groups were shared back to the larger group in plenary. Discussions ran for approximately two hours, with some being extended to allow for continued discussion. Seven out of the 28 group sessions were facilitated by Dennery Resources Inc.⁷, an Ottawa based consulting organization. Dennery Resources Inc. brought together a team of racialized, senior facilitators⁸ highly skilled at working with and facilitating spaces for diverse populations, such as Black, Indigenous and racialized communities as they intersect with 2SLGBTQ+, and people with disabilities. The remainder of the sessions were facilitated by the Human Rights and Equity Advisor and members of the Indigenous education team and equity team at the OCDSB. A full list of the group discussions offered is attached as **Appendix 3**.

One-on-one key informant interviews were also held. Some participants were approached by the reviewer and asked to contribute. Others reached out to the reviewer directly or through the dedicated email address requesting an opportunity to share perspectives in a confidential space. One-on-one interviews were directed around the question of “what do you think about police involvement in schools” and lasted for as long as the interviewee had perspectives to contribute. They ranged in length from half an hour to 2 hours in length. A complete list of the one-on-one interviews is attached as **Appendix 4**.

⁶ Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization

⁷ Dominique Dennery leads Dennery Resources Inc. and was the leader of the facilitation team.

⁸ The senior facilitators were Shequita Thompson-Reid and Kola Iluyomade.

Written submissions were also received by the reviewer. A dedicated email address was set up on the OCDSB police involvement in schools webpage to receive submissions. In addition, some people sent submissions directly to the reviewer's email address. A complete list of the written submissions received is attached as **Appendix 5**.

In addition to the information set out above, relevant District minutes were also accessed that pertained to police involvement in schools.⁹

Perspectives of marginalized communities

"When the school board re-evaluates the SRO program and looks into what effect police officers have on our students, I hope that you also look at lived experiences and take the time to listen to the stories of individuals ... To call upon the memories I have is painful, emotional and it is not something that I or many other students are comfortable with." Indigenous Student Trustee

This report seeks to accurately reflect the nuanced perspectives heard from marginalized communities. The discussion below will reflect in summary, how perspectives about a particular role or impact may be different depending on the participants' lived experiences. We recognize that intersections in identity influence how a person experiences the world. We also recognize that identity groups are not a monolith, with just one perspective or position. Experiences and perspectives range across a spectrum. To honour the rich perspectives and voices that identity groups brought forward, a detailed reflection can be found in appendices to this report, as follows:

- **Appendix 6** - Perspectives shared by Indigenous Peoples
- **Appendix 7** - Perspectives shared by the Black community
- **Appendix 8** - Perspectives shared by the Somali community
- **Appendix 9** - Perspectives shared by community of people with Disabilities
- **Appendix 10** - Perspectives shared by 2SLGBTQ+ community
- **Appendix 11** - Perspectives shared by Gloucester and Ridgemont catchment areas

Legal and policy framework

In Ontario, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services directs school boards and police services to establish and follow a protocol to address school-related occurrences and all involvement activities. In Ottawa, the four publicly funded school boards and the Ottawa Police Service (OPS) have jointly developed the *Protocol to Accompany Safe Schools Policies in the City of Ottawa, 2020* (Ottawa Protocol). It is based on the Ontario *Provincial Model for Local Police/School Board Protocol, 2015* (Provincial Protocol).

The Ministry of Education recognizes an essential role for police in making schools and communities safer.¹⁰ It recognizes the role of police to investigate incidents in accordance with the local protocol between the police service and the school board. Incidents that require mandatory police notification are identified in Provincial Protocol.

⁹ OCDSB Board Public Minutes, June 22, 2020; YouTube recording of OCDSB Committee of the Whole Meeting, June 22, 2020 accessed on May 21, 2021 at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8j2JYzXplRk>; OCDSB Indigenous Education Advisory Council, June 25, 2020

¹⁰ *Policy/Program Memorandum No. 128* (2019), The Provincial Code of Conduct and School Board Codes of Conduct, Ministry of Education.

The OCDSB policy governing police involvement in schools¹¹ identifies the objectives of police involvement to include:

1. encouraging ongoing, adaptive, and responsive partnerships between police and the school community;
2. assisting in providing for the greater safety and protection of, students, teachers, staff and volunteers in schools;
3. facilitating sharing and disclosure of appropriate information;
4. promoting joint consultation and partnerships between the school board and police services on maintaining a safe school environment;
5. ensuring that the obligations and requirements of both the education and the law enforcement systems are met;
6. ensuring that the rights of students and staff are respected when police are involved in schools and at school-sponsored events; and
7. ensuring compliance with the Provincial Protocol, the Ottawa Protocol, the *Youth Criminal Justice Act* and the *Child and Family Services Act*.

It actively encourages collaboration in developing preventative strategies for progressive discipline to reduce the level of violence and aggression. It also establishes the SRO as the main police contact for the school. The accompanying procedure¹² supplements the policy and sets out the role of the SRO and lists incidents that the OCDSB has identified as mandatory to report to the police.

Role of the SRO

The SRO program in Ottawa falls under the scope of the Ottawa Protocol. In Ottawa, there are 24 full-time SROs who support all 375 schools across the four school boards and private schools. This is a ratio of approximately one SRO for every 17 schools. Two of these SROs provided dedicated support to Gloucester High School (GHS) and Ridgemont High School and the seven elementary schools in their catchment areas.¹³ This is a ratio of approximately one SRO for every 4.5 schools. This dedicated support is provided through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)¹⁴ between the OCDSB and the OPS. Under the MOU, OCDSB contributes approximately \$95,000 per year towards the salary of one of these officers. The remaining 23 SROs in the Ottawa SRO program are paid for by the OPS.

The OPS identifies¹⁵ the principle areas of focus of the SRO program as:

- Prevention/Education

¹¹ P.043.SCO Police Involvement in Schools

<https://pub-ocdsb.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=7966> accessed on 02/25/2021

¹² PR.533.SCO Police Involvement in Schools

[https://weblink.ocdsb.ca/WebLink/0/edoc/2960186/PR%20533%20SCO%20-%20Police%20Involvement%20In%20Schools%20\(2\).pdf](https://weblink.ocdsb.ca/WebLink/0/edoc/2960186/PR%20533%20SCO%20-%20Police%20Involvement%20In%20Schools%20(2).pdf) accessed on 02/25/2021

¹³ Emily Carr Middle School, Queen Elizabeth Public School, Henry Munro Middle School and York Street Public School are the elementary schools in Gloucester High School's catchment area. Featherston Drive Public School, Roberta Bondar Public School and Sawmill Creek Elementary School are in the Ridgemont High School catchment area.

¹⁴ Urban and Priority High Schools Program, Memorandum of Understanding between the Ottawa Police Services and Ottawa-Carleton District School Board hereinafter "Urban Priorities MOU".

¹⁵ See

<https://www.ottawapolice.ca/en/safety-and-crime-prevention/School-Resource-Officer-Program.aspx> accessed on April 26, 2021

- Intervention/Diversion
- Community Partnerships
- Proactive Policing (student engagement)
- Reactive Policing (responding to school-based calls)
- Enforcement and application of the law.

Consistent with the OPS website, the MOU highlights the importance of the visible presence of SROs at school and notes that their function includes both proactive and reactive police investigative services.¹⁶ The SRO may assist in resolving conflict by a verbal caution, counseling, mediation, diversion to an intervention program, or a charge. They are also responsible for providing law and safety-related information and guidance which could include lectures, The SRO may also provide support to parents of students if requested.

The SRO is intended to offer a consistent and purposeful response to issues through prevention, intervention and enforcement strategies.¹⁷ The SRO may be called upon both formally and informally by the school principal when it is felt that police intervention is in the best interests of a student and/or the school.¹⁸

Training for SROs

The SRO Program is coordinated centrally out of the Youth Intervention and Diversion Unit. Information provided by the OPS indicates that SROs must have a minimum of 5 years of experience and express an interest in working with youth. In addition to the training held by a regular patrol officer, it is mandatory for SROs to complete some pre-service training prior to taking up the role and then complete mandatory in-service training when it is available. The pre-service training covers information related to the Ottawa Protocol, extrajudicial measures under the *Youth Criminal Justice Act* and diversion training. The SROs also engage in Annual summer training which includes refreshers on mandatory pre-service training and engagement with Safe Schools Principals to identify and address school trends and issues.

A detailed list of the mandatory pre-service and during service training can be found at **Appendix 12**. A summary of the hours spent on each training was not provided.

95% of participants in the survey indicated that it was important that police officers have specialized training on how to work effectively with youth. 90% of participants in the survey agreed that it was important for police officers to have specialized training on anti-racism and cultural awareness for the communities that they serve. This sentiment was also reflected in many of the discussions that took place as part of the review process.

“I question the selection process for the SROs and the kind of special training required to work with school-aged children. If one officer in one building is trusted by the school community, the rest of the officers on the police force must be held accountable for their actions outside schools and deemed trustworthy by all people.” Indigenous Employee

The list does not include training on working effectively with children and youth, nor does it include any training on anti-racism or cultural awareness.

¹⁶ Urban Priorities MOU supra note 6 at para.

¹⁷ OCDSB PR.533.SCO Police Involvement in Schools at s. 2.4

¹⁸ OCDSB PR.533.SCO Police Involvement in Schools at s. 2.4

PERSPECTIVES ON POLICE INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES AND ITS IMPACTS

Typical SRO interactions in schools

A presentation by OPS Chief Peter Sloly to the OCDSB Board of Trustees in December 2020 gave some insight into what types of activities SROs spend their time engaging in at Ottawa schools.¹⁹ Further clarification was subsequently provided by the OPS for the purposes of this review. The following table summarizes the annual interactions logged across Ottawa by SROs based on data collected over 2017/2018 and 2018/2019. It includes actions of all 24 SROs in all 375 schools in the four Boards. Given that OCDSB is the largest Board, the OPS is confident that it accurately reflects actions in OCDSB specific schools as well:

Table 2: Average annual SRO interactions

Type	Number	Includes
Interactions	7062	Everything except for calls to service that are made to 911
Report	841	Number of police reports generated
Criminal investigations	324	Number of criminal investigations resulting from the police reports.
Criminal charges	63	Number of criminal charges resulting from criminal investigations

This data does not capture calls to service that were made to the OPS dispatch (911) rather than going through the SRO. The OPS estimates that approximated 4 to 5% of the SROs calls to service arise from 911 calls. The rest are either self-initiated by the SRO or initiated by the administrator, parent or student. The OPS noted that it categorizes all work done by the SRO, with the exception of responding to 911 calls, as *proactive* work in its system. This is because the OPS sees a strong connection between the work that it does and the safety and security of the school and provision of services to youth.²⁰

In focus group discussions with SROs they described their work to include talking to students, supporting victims, giving advice to administrators, helping assess threats posed by students, responding to incidents, investigating crimes, mentoring students and linking students and families to community services, engaging in extracurricular activities and using youth diversion to support youth in conflict with the law.

Typical police involvement by OCDSB

It is impossible to get an accurate reflection of police involvement across OCDSB schools from internal data because it is not OCDSB's practice to require administrators to collect data and report on when they contact the police to intervene in a situation. There is no accountability of administrators to their Superintendents for their use of police and, unlike for suspension and

¹⁹ Taken from OPS presentation to the OCDSB Board of Trustees on December 14, 2020 accessed on May 3, 2021 <https://pub-ocdsb.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=9027>

²⁰ Information provided by OPS in email dated May 24, 2021.

expulsions, there is no public reporting requirement. This is a significant concern from an accountability perspective and raises considerable human rights concerns. Without accurate data collection it is more difficult to identify whether students with identities protected under the Ontario *Human Rights Code* are experiencing discrimination in administrators' application of their discretion to involve the police.

The program and police involvement has not been critically examined and evaluated for its impact on Indigenous, racialized and minoritized students. Instead it is assumed to be a success, based on little evidence other than perceptions of the predominantly white adults (at OCDSB and OPS) who put it in place and benefit from its operation. Benefits to students have been assumed for decades without any data, analysis or feedback or critical evaluation to back up the assertions. This is not aligned with a human rights-based approach, which requires accountability and also requires the OCDSB to centre the best interests of the child in decision making.

To get a snapshot of how police are currently being used by administrators in OCDSB schools, administrators were asked to provide information about the last two times that they called the police to respond to an incident at their school. We received information about 190 involvements. Approximately 16% involved incidents where it was mandatory to notify the police under the Provincial Protocol; 74% resulted in contact between the police and students and their families; 25% involved someone who was Indigenous or racialized; 23% involved people with disabilities; and 32% involved children under the age of criminal responsibility. A detailed summary of the types of incidents reported by administrators can be found at **Appendix 13**.

Incidents that require mandatory notification of police

The use of police to respond, when needed, to serious incidents and emergencies similar to those listed as mandatory incidents requiring police notification, was largely accepted by participants of all identities in the review. There were outliers who preferred a total abolition of police involvement in schools, but that position is not aligned with existing obligations under the Provincial Protocol nor from the reality that serious incidents do occur from time to time and police involvement is required in order to maintain safety.

"I worked as a teacher for thirteen years. In those years I have seen a student stab another student, child pornography charges and assaults occur within the school building. There are times when the laws of living in a community are broken." Indigenous Employee

Data collected from administrators points to a practice of the SRO consistently responding to incidents that require mandatory notification unless they require an immediate presence. When situations require an immediate and timely presence, it appears from the data that Patrol officers are more likely to respond.

An important distinction is that the Provincial Protocol requires mandatory *notification* of the police; it does not require mandatory attendance at the school premises to respond to the notification. When the OCDSB is considering ways to reduce harm by limiting police engagement, this should be an area of consideration.

Dysregulated behaviour and elopement

Looking at the snapshot provided by the administrator survey it is clear that the most common reasons that administrators call for police response is in relation to dysregulated behaviour and to respond to situations where children have left the premises without permission (elopement). A table summarizing the identities of the children involved in these incidents reveals some interesting information:

Table 3: Administrator recollection of recent calls to police for dysregulated behaviour and elopement

	Number	Under 12	Male	Racialized	Disability	SRO Response
Dysregulated	25	14	19	6	11	11
Elopement	25	16	20	5	12	14

The majority of the incidents involved responses to the behaviour of children under 12. Additionally, boys were significantly over-represented. Another interesting observation is that almost half of the responses involved children with disabilities. The SRO was only able to respond to approximately half of the calls, with a patrol officer responding to the remainder. This information is interesting because it raises questions about why males are so over-represented. It also signals that the most common types of police involvement are responses to the behaviour of children with disabilities which brings to question whether the OCDSB is adequately meeting its obligation to accommodate children with disabilities in the educational setting.

Through interviews with SROs they identified that administrators and the OCDSB need to have better training and de-escalation techniques relating to dysregulated students, as some SRO's expressed that school staff deferred that responsibility to police whom they called to help deal with these situations. The ability of OCDSB employees to attempt to deal with the situation themselves was emphasized with police involvement being reserved for higher risk situations only.

The need for an alternative to police involvement when responding to dysregulated behaviour of children, including children with disabilities, was reflected in many conversations among staff. Many participants commented that there is an under-resourcing of educational assistants (EAs) such that schools need to "beg" for them each year. Participants also commented on the lack of sufficient specialized training and experience for EAs assigned to support children with dysregulated behaviour, the reported "hands-off" practice that staff members say leads to increased police involvement because they can't act to de-escalate; and the risk adverse nature of some principals who worry about personal liability as factors that lead to over-involvement of police in responding to dysregulated behaviour.

"Using the police brings the whole criminalization lens onto their behaviour when we use them to respond to dysregulated behaviour in the classroom. Other organizations have staff who go hands-on – but sometimes it doesn't even need to go there if you deal with it well." Former Employee

"I've only seen an SRO engage once during the last 4 years. A girl with Autism had struck or pushed me. It was not ideal but not the worst case scenario. She

stormed out the front door and as soon as she touched the sidewalk she was off school property and apparently the police needed to be called. The police came and handcuffed her and had her on the ground. The girl with Autism had no idea what was going on and it turned even worse because of police intervention.”
Employee

“My son has ADHD and when he was 10 the police were called and they didn’t know what to do with him and were quite physical. It ended up causing much more distress than help and it set up the rest of the school year to make it unsuccessful.” Parent

Students, parents and guardians and community members also expressed concerns about the OCDSB practice of using police to respond to dysregulated behaviour. When asked about their level of agreement with involving police to respond to out of control behaviour at school, significant reservations were expressed. The tables below set out the level of disagreement with using a police response and highlight the percentage of respondents who preferred a non-police response, across identity groups. People who identified as Black, with Disabilities or 2SLGBTQ+ had the highest reservations and also registered the highest support for requesting a non-police response.

Table 4: Percentage of respondents who *do not agree*²¹ with having police involved in specific activities or see police involvement as a last resort

Type of Activity	All Respondents	Indigenous	Black	Middle Eastern	Muslim	Disabilities	2SLGBTQ+
Respond to out of control behaviour	56%	54%	69%	51%	50%	65%	78%

Table 5: Percentage of respondents who prefer out of control behaviour to be handled by non-police

Type of Activity	All Respondents	Indigenous	Black	Middle Eastern	Muslim	Disabilities	2SLGBTQ+
Respond to out of control behaviour	18%	19%	24%	15%	14%	30%	39%

“A victim of bullying, my son had learning differences, impulse control, and mental health issues resulting in physical outbursts. The SRO was brought in to explain that if he were an adult, his behavior would be considered assault and he would be arrested. Fear tactics like this only make matters worse when stress behavior is treated as misbehavior. Very poor use of SRO.” Parent of Student with Disabilities

²¹ Includes respondents who selected strongly disagree, disagree, not sure, only as a last resort or who prefer it to be handled by non-police

Another participant spoke of the fear and worry that he felt as a young person, worried that his disability would cause him to behave in a way that led to the embarrassment of a police response.

“The second experience that I’ve had was that I was a student with severe mental health issues in high school. I had interactions with the police related to that but they were not at school. This is a fear when you have mental health issues: the police are going to be called on you at school because you are distressed and it will be a whole incident. If you aren’t a white person, an adverse behaviour can be construed as you being aggressive towards the police and may end up with a police reaction. Someone just put the boy with Autism’s handcuffed news story in the chat. It is distressing that police are being used as a crisis response for mental health and disability-related issues rather than a counsellor.”
Former Student with a Disability

In other discussions staff members, including educators and staff responsible for supporting student well-being expressed considerable concern over the institutionalized use of police to respond to dysregulated behaviour expressed by children with disabilities. Concerns were raised about it criminalizing stress behaviour and having longer term negative impacts on the children and leading to greater exposure to the police.

“The police are written into safety plans. Police may have unnecessary involvement. Are we failing students by having things escalate?” Employee with a Disability

Safety plan includes police - how can the behaviour of a 6 year old require a police officer to de-escalate the situation? Part of the problem stems from lack of resources and support for students to de-escalate. What is the triggering point and have we set up that student for success? We’re not allowed to touch or restrain them so we need to call the police officer - so what is our plan? Our place is to teach, to educate, to support, to build community. Having someone with a uniform and gun entering the room is not the best idea.” Black Employee

“There do not seem to be a lot of steps happening before calling in the police. De-escalation training would be helpful. These programs are not well thought out or well executed. I know they are trying not to make it a dumping ground. The child has the right to go to school but the child’s needs may be beyond what is offered.” Employee with a Disability

“BMS is cheaper to implement. All this comes down to money. We have loaded class sizes, and specialized classes are located out of the way. Our safety plans say call the police because we can’t touch the kids. We are still trying to run a regular school without resources.” Employee with a Disability

“I write safety plans for primary and we never call the police unless we lose sight of the child off property. We follow at a safe distance. We had an EA follow a child for 4 blocks on foot and my principal followed in the car. The child was Black and had Autism and I guarantee it would not have gone well if we had called the police.” Employee

One benefit valued by an administrator was the care an SRO put into developing helpful information to guide police response for a non-verbal student with disabilities who was known to run away from school from time to time. Taking the time to attach information to the student's name in the police system, with their parents' engagement and consent, would ensure that patrol officers who responded to the student were able to effectively support the student.

Perspectives shared by people with disabilities are discussed in more detail in **Appendix 8**. What is clear from what we are hearing is that a different kind of response is needed to better serve the children with dysregulated behaviours while maintaining a safe working and learning environment. It is also clear from speaking with employees and families that intersections in identity mean that Indigenous, Black and racialized children are significantly impacted by this practice. One administrator noted that the police were mainly called to the school to respond to the dysregulated behaviour of students in a specialized class. When asked for more information about the identity of the children in the class, we were told that seven out of the eight children in the class were Indigenous. This example highlights the need for the OCDSB to re-evaluate how it is choosing to manage dysregulated behaviour, to put into place ways for trusting relationships to be built with non-police who can help de-escalate and to create culturally relevant partnerships that can be activated to both prevent escalation and support students to de-escalate in a way that feels safe.

"It is important to have an Indigenous responder for Indigenous children in a classroom where there is an Indigenous student who needs support. There is a connection or something that happens that makes you feel like you belong when you have an Indigenous person respond. There are things that Indigenous people know that could help these kids that other people don't know ... just the smell of the smudge makes you feel better. What if that could help a child calm down and not have to call the police? You just don't know if you haven't tried."
Indigenous Former Employee

It is evident from the conversations that people within all levels of the OCDSB are starting to engage in these reflections and question whether a police response is the right response.

"There is a perspective perhaps that the mainstreaming of children with Autism leads to the necessary presence of police due to the inevitable meltdowns. Police are however not experts or even properly trained in de-escalation of special needs children. I can only imagine the good that would be done if the funding was instead spent on EAs or behaviour specialists." Parent

"A few years ago I worked at a school with a junior BIP class, the students ranged in age from 8-12. Although the students were often dysregulated they were still young children. One particular day a student had a very bad day, was dysregulated and was being quite destructive - none of his trusted teachers or admin were able to calm him. The police were called, unfortunately our regular SRO was not available. This particular student was 12, a bigger student and of colour. The police officer took the child out of the school, quite forcefully with hands behind his back, pushing him through the halls and the door. Now as a school we were able to keep the majority of the students away from windows, but of course they knew what was happening. Staff also knew what was happening. The stigma that this had on the child was a big one - teachers and students were wary of him and stayed away. Teachers also commented on the use of force the police officer used, some thought it was ok to give him a shove as the student

was not listening, most were disgusted that this happened. I know that the student was acting in an unsafe way, but I have often reflected on whether the police were the right people to deal with this child. It also raises the question about who we should be using if our SRO is not available - relationships are so very important when dealing with students.” Administrator

Suggestions heard emphasized the importance for the child to have a good relationship with a person within the District, who is trained on how to de-escalate explosive behaviour and that it is important to have culturally relevant responses and relationships. It was acknowledged that this did not necessarily have to be a police officer.

Suggestions for the way forward. Information learned during the review indicates that current OCDSB practices mean that children with disabilities are likely to have disproportionate involvement with the police in school. It is important to adjust policy and practice so that police response is seen and used as a last resort for children with disabilities. (1) It is strongly suggested that OCDSB put in place, and action, a plan to address the disproportionate level of police involvement with children with disabilities. This might include (a) introducing additional training on de-escalating explosive behaviour that goes beyond BMS and that is required for all staff in schools; (b) reconsider and clarify for staff hands on or hand off policies; (c) the development of formal community partnerships with non-police service providers, including culturally relevant service providers, who can provide a response alternative to police; (d) reconsidering the inclusion of a police response in safety plans and seeking other alternatives instead.

“Prevention doesn’t need to be through policing... How can we support staff to look at it as stress behaviour rather than wilful behaviour? We need more intense training of all staff, in all schools. We need more EAs with special training and this might help because they can put the time into waiting and helping a child to de-escalate. They need to have a trauma informed response not just BMS. BMS can’t be the only strategy ... People say that the child is “manipulating” or the parents “don’t come into meetings”. It’s because schools are scary places for them! We need a compassion-informed approach that is attachment-based and has an anti-oppression lens. “She’s just looking for attention” or is “manipulative” or “doesn’t care” - this is built into people’s way of thinking and needs to be challenged. Every year principals advocate for more EAs and it’s boggling that we need to fight for that.” Employee

“There are times when safety issues arise in schools. I’m in favour of the work that was led by the Tragic Event Response Teams (TERT) which support students impacted by significant life events. TERT is a multidisciplinary group of people trained to provide psychological first aid to students in the event of a tragic incident. A TERT response should be initiated first before a School Resource Officer (SRO) is called to respond to a threat to the personal safety of students. The school administrators can call upon their community partners as well to help with a significant event, impacting multiple youth.” Indigenous Community Member

“I have never seen students who have issues at school who don’t also have them at home and Crossroads has stepped in to help but the waitlist is so long and the parent need is so huge that there isn’t enough support. We are running into inevitable police involvement because Crossroads can’t link in.” Employee

Wellness checks

A practice that was identified within the District involved the use of SROs to do wellness checks on students at their home. Typically, a wellness check would be initiated by the administration if the student had been absent for a period of time and the school could not contact the family. Reservations were expressed about this practice and the detrimental longer term impact on the child's education was noted.

"This year we have called SROs to go for attendance checks because we cannot reach the families or the parents. Subsequent to one particular visit, the racialized family was completely fearful and stopped talking to the teacher. It destroyed that relationship between the family and the teacher because the family felt that the teacher had reported them and the SRO had been involved. They've completely disengaged from learning in that session." Employee

"My concerns are around things we know re how police respond to racialized communities and mental health issues. I have heard of wellness checks where somebody ends up getting killed." Employee

"A wellness check needed to be done for two students in my school. The white family got the white principal and white social worker, the Black family got the SRO." Racialized Employee

"SROs seem to have a lot of discretionary power and certain schools use them for some things and others do not and it seems to be up to the SRO. There is inconsistency of what the role of the SRO is. Sometimes they will go out for wellness checks (checking on attendance of students at home) and sometimes not." Employee

Suggestions for the way forward. The OCDSB should give consideration to identifying and using alternatives to the SRO when conducting wellness checks on families. Wellness checks, when they are necessary, should be done by non-police. OCDSB should consider identifying a culturally relevant community support parent to support these wellness checks together with staff, if needed.

Refusing to leave the school premises, fighting and bullying

Police are used in two main ways to respond to incidents like trespass, fighting and bullying. Police (usually SROs but often patrol officers when the SRO is not available) are called by administrators to respond to and stop these behaviours when they are happening. The second way they are used is when the administrators call SROs to support the progressive discipline response after the incident has deescalated. The observations made above in the section on progressive discipline, apply to the use of police as part of the progressive discipline process for these types of behaviours as well.

None of these behaviours require mandatory notification of the police under the Provincial Protocol so every involvement is at the discretion of the administrator. The snapshot provided by administrators indicated that out of 190 incidents that involved police, 12 involved someone refusing to leave the premises; 17 involved fighting and 8 involved bullying. Engaging in

anti-bullying education and talking to students involved in bullying is one of the activities that SROs specifically mentioned they supported in discussions for this review.

When asked about whether they supported police involvement to respond to these types of occurrences, the majority of respondents expressed concerns about using police. This is set out in more detail in the table below.

Table 6: Percentage of respondents who *do not agree*²² with having police involved in specific activities or see police involvement as a last resort

Type of Activity	All	Indigenous	Black	Middle Eastern	Muslim	Disabilities	2SLGBTQ+
Fighting	67%	68%	78%	63%	60%	70%	87%
Refusing to leave premises	53%	56%	67%	56%	59%	61%	75%
Bullying	69%	70%	80%	59%	63%	75%	84%

The reservations that survey respondents expressed about police involvement in these types of issues were highlighted by several examples shared by people who participated in group discussions, one-on-one interviews, and in written submissions.

One parent wrote to describe the trauma her child, who was a victim of online bullying, experienced as a result of the power imbalance when he was questioned by the administrator, the SRO and three adults from another school.

“Upon his return from school after the meeting the next day, my son was very upset. He described to me how when he entered the room he was surrounded by not only the VP and the SRO, but also three other adults ... Being completely outnumbered immediately placed my child in a subordinate position without anyone in the room as an advocate. It was wrong and unfair of the administration to do so. If I would have known that was what was in store for him I would never have agreed to the meeting. The staff were not transparent with their plan ... it only served to make my son feel like he was most definitely in trouble. ... The means they chose to deliver their message was traumatizing. These actions, behaviour, judgement and planning on the part of the administration, with the participation of the SRO, is unacceptable and must not happen again to any child.” Parent

A 2SLGBTQ+ family whose children experienced homophobic bullying wrote to express their children’s profound mistrust and fear of police. They noted the administrator’s competence in addressing the issue and reaffirmed that they would never want police involved in providing a response to bullying in the school.

²² Includes respondents who selected strongly disagree, disagree, not sure, only as a last resort or who prefer it to be handled by non-police

“There is a well-documented history of queer and gender non-conforming people experiencing greater harassment and targeting by police. In our communities, we know this and have experienced it... For us, safety does not come from policing, which is an institution that is designed to protect only the privileged... Our children do not trust or feel safe around police... We would never have wanted anyone in school to resort to police when either of our children were being bullied, nor when our youngest was experiencing homophobic bullying. Our children feel the same way.” 2SLGBTQ+ Family

Another parent of a Black youth recounted their son’s experience being “*interrogated*” by the SRO at school about a fight off-property that he witnessed. The fight involved children from another school. Despite only being a witness and never setting foot on the other school’s property, the child was issued a no trespass order by the SRO and told it would stay on his file until he turned 18. The parents spoke of their fear about their son suddenly being “*known to police*” and the impact it might have on the trajectory of his life.

Several people referenced the substantial and lasting harm that was caused to several young children, some of whom were Indigenous, when the administrator used their discretion to involve two SROs when the students would not leave the premises. The young students were responding loudly and angrily but without violence. The involvement of the SROs triggered the students and their behaviour escalated, but remained non-violent. The episode ended with several patrol cars arriving, and the children being forcibly restrained face down on the floor, handcuffed and dragged across the floor during a struggle. It resulted in several of the students facing criminal charges for resisting being restrained by the police and it significantly and permanently impacted on the children’s family status, relationships, housing security and education.

Children do not wear their trauma on their face. Unless an administrator has a relationship with them it is not always possible to know who will be triggered and who will not by police involvement. Choosing to exercise discretion to ask for a police response for matters that are, at their core misbehaviour or stress behaviour, always brings with it the risk of escalation and the risk of causing greater harm by bringing a security force response to behaviour that is not, in its essence, criminal. While both SROs and patrol officers are trained in de-escalation, they are still trained security forces and the use of force is a very real and plausible tool in their kit. Every single time that an administrator exercises their discretion to call police to respond to an incident, this should be done knowing that they are exposing children to the risk of use of force. This should always be weighed in the decision making.

Suggestions for the way forward. The OCDSB should consider revising its practice and limiting police engagement with students and their families to situations where it is absolutely required because either a serious crime has been committed or there is a significant and imminent risk to safety. The OCDSB should take steps to identify non-police response alternatives which may include staff or community partners.

Progressive discipline

A large number of people raised concerns that SROs were being used as part of the progressive discipline process to scare children. This observation is troubling from a human rights perspective as it conflicts with the right of the child to be subject to discipline that respects the inherent dignity of each child. It is also troubling because it demonstrates at best a lack of awareness of the potential trauma that exposure to police has for many Indigenous, Black and

marginalized children or at worst a lack of concern about the potential trauma this type of practice may inflict on an Indigenous, Black or marginalized child.

“My experience with SROs, I can't think of one that was positive ...I remember this one specific case where I was helping a newcomer student ... There was a disagreement with a group of girls and the SRO just happened to be visiting the schools. I saw the girl crying and asked her why she was crying. She said that the principal told her that the SRO was here for her for the fight that happened earlier ... the principal said that the SRO just happened to be there, so they were using the SRO to scare her a little bit. I hear a lot from people I work with and students who say they have had very bad experiences.” Racialized Employee

“There is no benefit by scaring kids at school, neither is that the place to create more trust. It only furthers the distrust.” Racialized Student

“School administrators use SROs to bully students and intimidate/threaten them.” Parent

“What I have seen in my experience as a youth worker is that SROs are often used as a means to discipline/intimidate children when teachers cannot “deal with” trouble students. This is very much up to the administrator and the issue of biases is really important here. SROs are not trained or equipped to handle youth with disabilities.” Parent

“There is no separation between what happens in the community and in school. I have seen kids as young as 6 and 7 interacting with police and teachers using police as a scare tactic is perpetuating fear and trauma. We are doing this to people who are vulnerable and marginalized.” Somali Former Student and Parent

“It’s very important to think about the impact that police have and principals are using them as a form of discipline in elementary school. To scare kids...It’s still not ok, even if the police officer is racialized. The purpose was to scare the child and it’s not ok.” Black Employee

The concerns about police being used to scare children in the progressive discipline process, were also linked to overall concerns that administrators were using their discretion to disproportionately involve police in responding to the behaviour of Indigenous, Black and marginalized children. This concern is aligned with findings in the recently released OCDSB data on suspension and expulsion which confirms that Indigenous, Black, Middle Eastern, gender diverse and students with disabilities have higher rate of suspensions than their proportion of the population would expect.²³

“I was helping out with an 8 year old, racialized boy who had a trauma history. The Mom didn’t speak English and they called the SRO to talk to him. This is still happening!” Employee

“My son has been involved in a couple of incidents at school involving allegations of bullying. The principal threatened my son with the police coming to the house.”

²³ OCDSB, *2018-2019 Student Suspension Report*, 2020. Accessed on May 27, 2021. <https://pub-ocdsb.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=8618>

The principal told me that the police will be notified and to expect a visit from the police at home. There was no sharing of prevention strategies. The SRO placed a call to the police. It was a total threat. SRO backed off when I pointed to our ethnicity. My son has Indigenous friends who have had it worse. The whole experience with school and SRO was threatening. There was no mediation.” Muslim Parent

“A key concern that I find is that police are called to discipline “problem students” more than they are to respond to serious criminal concerns in the schools. Unfortunately labelling “problem students” comes with many biases from administration or teachers. Also, the use of police to discipline students when the school feels they can’t, often traumatizes students and therefore is not in the student’s best interest.” Somali Community Member

“Someone at the school can call the police for anything - especially when we already know that the police will target BIPOC - how can we feel as parents knowing that it is a choice for the school to call or not the police. We know we live in a society where racism exists and we know being a teacher or an educator doesn’t protect against racism. It’s going to be based on stereotypes, racial bias, perceptions and research already shows us that there is profiling racial in school and BIPOC kids are going to be the ones who are targeted.” Arabic-Speaking Parent

Other concerns were raised about the disproportionate use of the SRO in the progressive discipline process to respond to behaviour of Black, Indigenous and marginalized children, where similar behaviour by white children did not generate a police response. Several examples of the disproportionate involvement of the SRO to respond to the behaviour of Indigenous, Black and marginalized children were shared.

In one situation an Employee described a school needing to do a wellness check on two different students because they weren’t attending. One student was white and the other student was Black. The principal sent a staff member to do the wellness check at the home of the white child, but sent the SRO to do the wellness check on the Black child, completely not taking into account the detrimental impact that the arrival of a police officer at the home of a Black family might have.

Another example:

“In primary I saw the SRO used to play the role of disciplinarian for a child who did something wrong. There were two incidents, involving two different children. Both used classroom tools to try to hurt other students. One was white and one was Black. The only child the principal chose to have the officer speak to was the young Somali boy... The principal had no right to subject a 6 year old child to a police officer. The only child who saw the officer was the Black child.” Black Employee

Others were concerned about bias driving the discretion teachers and administrators exercise to escalate a matter to an SRO. Several stories that were shared by people highlighted the reality of this fear.

One Black youth shared his experience of racial bias against young, male Black students driving the responses of some educators. A fight erupted after a sports game at school between students from two schools. This youth and his racialized friends were in the area for the game, but not participating in the fight. Despite this he was wrongfully threatened, calls were made to his family by the school and he was given a warning by the administration to avoid situations like that in the future.

“There were people there who not only assumed I was involved in the fight but said that they were going to tell the police officer that I was in the fight - it was a teacher who did this! They are weaponizing the police.

Black men fear that at any time someone can call the police as a weapon. The “karen’s” are calling the cops because they see or assume something suspicious - walking while Black or jogging while Black - It’s a genuine fear because we see it all the time. Just doing nothing and getting the cops called on you - sometimes nothing happens but sometimes you get arrested, sometimes you get traumatized. It’s not something that should be taken lightly...

I replay it over and over in my mind. I did nothing wrong.” Black Former Student

Discussions with employees and administrators, as well as the survey results, indicate a growing number of staff are becoming aware of the trauma that can be associated with police involvement, particularly for Indigenous, Black and marginalized communities. A growing number of administrators also indicated that they are taking steps to check their bias, change their responses and limit police engagement with students.

“I also wanted to add some additional thoughts about today's session that I did not feel comfortable raising during the consultation itself. I was very concerned that everyone in today's meeting is a white administrator in our secondary schools and, as a result, our own bias and "appreciation" for police work in schools may not be reflective of the reality of the students we serve in our schools. As much as I appreciate my colleagues and the work we do, I'm not sure how many folks are engaged in questioning their blind trust in the police and how they carry out matters in our schools. I admit that I am new to these realizations myself; for many years, I implicitly trusted the SRO's who entered the schools I worked in and did not really question the impact of their role or their presence on students. These experiences ... combined with my own work in equity and inclusion, have brought me to this point where I am actively questioning the need for the police in our schools. While I'm not saying we should not have the police at all, I do wonder how we can possibly have them in schools without causing further harm to our vulnerable students. There is so much to be repaired and I'm hoping that some of my Principal colleagues are reaching out to you with the same questions and concerns as me!” Administrator

“The mere act of having a police officer outside of your school or walking through the door can be uncomfortable for some students in the building. We need to tread carefully and be aware of that when we engage with police. This isn’t a new thing - it’s just that our awareness has improved.” Administrator

As a couple of employees put it:

“They need to be out of the classroom. If your classroom management issues need to be resolved by a police officer you shouldn’t be a teacher or an administrator”. Black Employee

“The SRO is there to make the principal’s job easier. It’s great to be able to rely on them to bring information and share. But, the impact it has on kids and the trauma it causes isn’t worth it. They have lost their purpose.” Administrator

Suggestions for the way forward. The OCDSB has done some work through training to help staff members develop the skills that they need to identify and address unconscious bias. However there is much more that needs to be done. The OCDSB needs to prioritize and centre professional development opportunities for its staff members to give them the skills they need to identify and remove unconscious bias from the discipline process. Coinciding with professional development must be the establishment of accountability mechanisms referenced later in this report to create transparency and hold both the District and staff members accountable for discriminatory practices.

The OCDSB should also give strong consideration to ending the practice of involving police in the progressive discipline process. This includes stopping the practice of bringing police in to speak to children about the consequences of their actions. Principals or other community partners who can provide the same information without the criminal lens should be considered instead.

Relationship building with students

There is a common narrative among members of OPS, management level staff at the OCDSB, and some parent and community members that the primary role of the SRO is to focus on relationship building with students. However this perception is not reflected in the policies, MOU or Protocol governing the relationship, which talk about both a preventative role for the SRO as well as a response role to incidents. It is also not clearly reflected in practice or impact. It became clear through conversations with SROs, employees, students, families and community members that perceptions of what relationship building with students involved, how effective it was, and what impact it had on Indigenous, Black and marginalized students varied widely across stakeholders.

The proactive role of the SRO inside the school engaging in relationship-building with students is not clearly evident. It seems to be determined, in a large part, by the personality of the individual SRO, combined with the workload of the SROs, the perspective of the administrators and the school.

Some students, even those in schools with priority SROs, noted only rare examples of visible police presence inside their schools. These include police officers being seen in the hallway or chatting with students in the lobby or the lunch area. At Ridgemont it was reported that prior to the pandemic the SROs walked around the school in pairs or groups of up to five, particularly around lunch time. In all these situations, the students are self-selecting whether they want to engage with the SROs.

“I don’t want police in my school. Fights happen in all schools. Even without their uniforms or guns. Take them out so everyone can feel safe ... Other schools have teachers talking to students. Administrators should build

relationships with students so they will talk to them. Police are making students feel more scared.” Indigenous Student

“I have not seen police talking with students at Ridgemont. I feel like they are watching us.” Black Student

“Sometimes police will sit outside or inside the school or in hallways. They will stare you down for no reason and try to be intimidating. I have never been racially profiled by a police officer in school but I know people who have been and it’s Black students mostly. I have never really seen anything bad happen with police officers at the school but I know that there are things that could happen. It’s not necessary to have them standing in hallways or in the office when you want to call home. It makes you feel uncomfortable. Indigenous Student

In another example, an employee noted that SROs pop into specialized program classrooms to speak with students with disabilities because the students reportedly enjoy interacting with first-responders. SROs reported, as did some employees, that a few SROs have engaged in extracurricular or sporting events from time to time at schools. The SROs reported that these extracurricular activities led to friendly relationships with some students, including racialized students. This was also the observation of some staff members but many more staff members commented on the ineffectiveness of the relationship building efforts and the unintended negative impacts on Indigenous, Black and marginalized students.

“In my former school, the SRO assigned to the school attended social events in plain clothes and built authentic relationships with many students. I believe that when someone who wields authority is sensitive to a particular school’s community, a partnership is beneficial. The cultural training that SROs receive must be re-examined.” Indigenous Employee

“The intention is there for them to be proactive and build the relationships but that’s not the impact. At this point, police shouldn’t be in school because school should be as safe as school can be and police don’t do that. SROs are performative. They show up and play ball and they’re out and that’s not enough. I have had police come in and play ball and I thought it was ok and then I had a primary student come up to me and say it made her feel uncomfortable. It caused me to reflect and I realized it was not ok.” Black Employee

Building trust with students in conflict with the law was identified as an area of positive impact by SROs, by some employees and a parent. Students supported under the OPS diversion program typically include students who have engaged in a fight, theft or assault. The diversion program is delivered by the Ottawa Boys and Girls Club and some students in the program attend OCDSB. The OCDSB has its own Diversion Counsellor who provides additional support to youth who are in the OPS diversion program due to an incident that may have occurred at school or in the community.

One parent credited the SRO for helping her son access the diversion program, which had a positive impact on his life:

“Unfortunately one of our kids is in the diversion program and a SRO was instrumental in getting our son into the program. If we had police come into the schools who did not have a relationship with us, the result likely would have been

very different. At least this police officer was advocating on behalf of my child. It has been life changing for him.” Parent

The Diversion Counsellor works closely with the SROs. Approximately 20 to 25 youth may work with the Diversion Counselor during a given school year. Other youth access diversion through the community without being connected to the school based Diversion Counsellor. Both the Diversion Counsellor and the SROs reported several students seeking SROs out for advice about a criminal process or to ask for help to get out of a situation like a fight that had been planned. This reportedly occurred after the students met the SRO through group meetings. Some of the students in this program are racialized.

Although all police officers have the authority to use diversion for youth in conflict with the law, in discussions the OPS indicated that SROs are the officers with the most training on how to apply diversion.

Overall the information shared in the consultations indicates that significant two-way relationship building is not going on between SROs and many students. A very small number of concrete examples were brought forward by students or families, who are best placed to evaluate the actual impact, whether positive or negative, on themselves. However the vast remainder of references to positive relationships by students or their families were limited to generalizations about the police officer being “nice” or “kind” or “friendly” or “smiling”. There is no real indication that this is resulting in concrete, positive educational outcomes for children, which is the core business of OCDSB. There is however significant information to suggest that their presence in school is causing harm to a significant proportion of the OCDSB student population, and in particular Indigenous, Black and marginalized community members, as described throughout this report.

Several schools noted that they had discontinued the practice of walking the hallways with SROs because of concerns about the message that it was sending to students who do not enjoy a good relationship with police and the triggering impact it can have on some students.

“If the role of the SRO and the primary role was to be proactive I haven’t witnessed that in my entire time teaching or being a student at the OCDSB. I worked at two schools that had SROs assigned and I would see the SROs say hello to people on the way into the office but moving beyond that I haven’t witnessed any proactive relationship building.” Black Employee

“For 7 years I’ve seen SROs come into the front door and go to the office and that’s it... I know I’ve had some SROs who are good people but haven’t seen a lot of two way relationship building - just us requesting them to do things - i.e. come and talk to our class.” Employee

“I don’t think bringing guys with guns into schools is going to build any sort of trust between students [and the police].” Black Student

“Racialized students, students with siblings or parents who have been through the justice system, ELD students and others with PTSD ... Uniforms and guns trigger. These are the “powder keg of triggering kids”. We don’t know the impact on kids - we only know the impact because kids feel safe to tell us.” Administrator

“The SRO program does not build relationships with students but the partnership only protects the policing institution. When the District protects the SRO program, they are actively discouraging students from attending classes and trusting the school board and the administration.” Indigenous Student

Numerous participants in discussions questioned the premise that relationship-building between police and Indigenous, Black, racialized and minoritized students was appropriate, that relationship building between students and the police was appropriate in a school setting, or whether the current approach, which has been going on for decades, has had any positive impacts. These are fundamental assumptions underlying the SRO program that have been taken for granted at OCDSB, accepted as true and never interrogated.

“They call them SROs but there is almost no connection between the officers and the students. I was well known in the school but I didn’t know anyone in the school who interacted with the officers or even knew their names. There is such a disconnect between the police and the students ... Relationship building does not exist - there is no relationship between students and police. There might be between teachers but not with students. So what is the point? The teachers aren’t the ones seen as criminals. The narrative and what they are actually doing aren’t the same - there is no relationship.” Black Former Student

Underlying it is that “We just need to help kids and families see that police aren’t bad.” That is what administrators think. We are helping the police rather than questioning the impact on students. Where is the self-reflection?” Administrator

“Why are we trying to build relationships with the police? Our mandate is a culture of caring and social responsibility etc. Why are we taking on the responsibility to build a positive relationship with the police?” Black Employee

“Is it important for children to have positive relationships with police and if so, is school the right place to engage in those kinds of activities or should it be done outside of schools? Police come into school, stand in hallways and park out front. One person who identified as Black said that police as your friend is a narrative for white kids. It is not what I teach my children. Is having a police officer in school good for Indigenous kids and does it make them feel safe?” Indigenous Parent

“I spend a lot of time gathering with Indigenous youth. I asked them if they would ever approach a police officer in their school with a question or an emergency and all of the young people said that they would never speak to a police officer willingly, under any circumstances.” Indigenous Community Member

The feedback from the survey tends to confirm perceptions and experiences heard in the group discussions and one-on-one interviews. When asked about their level of support for having police in schools to engage in relationship-building with students and families, a substantial percentage (67%) of current students either disagreed with the idea, weren’t sure, thought it should only be done as a last resort or preferred for it to be done by non-police. The level of disagreement was pretty much consistently strong across identity groups, with respondents who identified as Black and respondents who identified as 2SLGBTQ+ having the most significant concerns at 94% and 89% respectively and respondents who identified as Middle Eastern and Muslim having the least concerns at 60% respectively.

Table 7: Current students’ level of agreement with police involvement to build relationships with students and families

Identity Group	Combined Categories	Disagree or Strongly Disagree	Not sure	Only as a last resort	Prefer non-police
All	67%	19%	12%	6%	30%
Indigenous	71%	7%	21%	14%	29%
Black	94%	33%	4%	11%	46%
Middle Eastern	60%	15%	12%	6%	27%
Muslim	60%	12%	17%	7%	24%
Disabilities	75%	22%	9%	8%	36%
2SLGBTQ+	89%	35%	9%	4%	41%

What we heard during this consultation process is reflective of research findings that have examined the impact of relationship building between SROs and students, and in particular the impact on Indigenous, Black and marginalized students.

The following research analysis is taken from a literature review on police involvement in schools recently completed by the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB).²⁴

The HWDSB Research and Analytics Department noted that the lack of racial and ethnic diversity in research on SROs is problematic which makes it unclear “if SROs have built positive relationships with students, if they reduce crime and misbehavior or have any impact on school safety whatsoever”.²⁵ It was concluded that the quality, frequency and the average time an SRO spent in communication with a student was significantly related to student’s perceptions of the SRO.²⁶ This suggests that how long and how often police officers communicate with students was connected with the extent to which students positively perceived having an SRO in school.

The assumption that having an SRO present in school will help to build positive relationships between students and police does not appear to be supported by research. It was found that having “a resource officer in school does not significantly predict youth perceptions of police but rather opinions of the police force as a whole played a larger role in predicting youth perceptions

²⁴ See Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (2021), *Police School Liaison Program Literature Review* accessed on June 6, 2021 on p. 9

<https://www.hwdsb.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/meetings/Standing-Committee-Agenda-1622755995.pdf>

²⁵ HWDSB Literature Review (2021) a p. 8 citing Kim, Y. (2014). *Students' Perceptions of School Resource Officers* (Doctoral dissertation, Texas State University, 2014). Ann Arbor, MI: ProQuest

<https://www.hwdsb.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/meetings/Standing-Committee-Agenda-1622755995.pdf>

²⁶ HWDSB Literature Review (2021) a p. 8 citing Kim, Y. (2014). *Students' Perceptions of School Resource Officers* (Doctoral dissertation, Texas State University, 2014). Ann Arbor, MI: ProQuest.

of the police; if a youth has had good interactions with police previously, they were likely to have positive perceptions of police in the future and vice versa for negative interactions”.²⁷

Other research showed that more SRO interactions increased students’ positive attitudes about SROs yet decreased school connectedness.²⁸

The following excerpt from the HWDSB literature review adds nuance:

“When asked about their strategies for dealing with diverse students, SROs said they used a “colour-blind approach” in that they treated all students the same.²⁹ However, findings also indicated that SROs were looking for cues of student disadvantage and made an extra effort to befriend students from low socio-economic, disadvantaged family backgrounds: those who had incarcerated family members, and students with special educational or behaviour needs. Predictably, students perceived such increased attention as intimidating and they felt targeted since they compared the differences in attention between themselves and their peers.³⁰

This SRO conflicting role of building trust and relationships and having to enforce the law could be the prime culprit to student and adult mistrust of the police. This highlights the importance of police reflective practice, the understanding of consequences of positive discrimination and the importance of understanding the foundations of negative perceptions of policing. Indeed, researchers have found that these perceptions do not solely reside with communities or individuals, but rather with the intentions and actions of police, evidence that suggests racialized people are policed in different ways to white people.³¹ Yet other research suggests that mistrust and negative perceptions of the police are deeply rooted in community perceptions and any individual who is seen to be police friendly or

²⁷ HWDSB Literature Review (2021) a p. 8 citing Maybury, M. S. (2019). The Impact of School Resource Officers on Adult Perceptions of Police: Do SROs Influence Youth Perceptions of Police and Do These Opinions Persist Into Adulthood? (Doctoral dissertation, Texas A&M University-Central Texas, 2017). Ann Arbor, MI: ProQuest

²⁸ HWDSB Literature Review (2021) a p. 8 citing Theriot, M. (2020). The Impact of School Resource Officer Interaction on Students Feelings about School and School Police accessed on May 24, 2021 at <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0011128713503526>

²⁹ Kupchik, A. and Fisher, B. (2020). Police Ambassadors: Student-Police Interactions in School and Legal Socialization at p. 416. https://219751e2-9443-42c7-8c01-a1083bc8150f.filesusr.com/ugd/46d76f_1c2ae9239e51427aa4dab6b5ff8825e5.pdf

³⁰ Kupchik, A. and Fisher, B. (2020). Police Ambassadors: Student-Police Interactions in School and Legal Socialization at p. 416. https://219751e2-9443-42c7-8c01-a1083bc8150f.filesusr.com/ugd/46d76f_1c2ae9239e51427aa4dab6b5ff8825e5.pdf

³¹ Legewie, Joscha and Jeffrey Fagan. 2019. “Aggressive Policing and the Educational Performance of Minority Youth”. American Sociological Review (forthcoming). <https://osf.io/preprints/socarxiv/rdchf/> and Kupchik, A. and Fisher, B. (2020). Police Ambassadors: Student-Police Interactions in School and Legal Socialization at p. 416. https://219751e2-9443-42c7-8c01-a1083bc8150f.filesusr.com/ugd/46d76f_1c2ae9239e51427aa4dab6b5ff8825e5.pdf

*sympathizing, is shunned, bullied, ostracised by their peers and accused of being a snitch.*³²

Suggestions for the way forward. Aligned with the suggestions above to limit police presence and involvement at school and to address the negative impacts expressed by a substantial proportion of Indigenous, Black and marginalized participants, relationship building activities in schools between police and students should be halted by the OCDSB.

Educational activities

Giving presentations to assemblies and in classrooms is another way that SROs engage at school. These presentations are given as simple outreach either initiated by the SRO or a request from the school and are also used as part of the progressive discipline process to respond to certain incidents when they arise either through a school-wide or class-wide presentation or through one-on-one engagement with the student and/or their family. An SRO explained:

“In situations where a student or parents don’t want the police to speak to their child directly because they are concerned about the optics, I can take that opportunity to address the class as a whole to speak in general about the impacts that that type of behaviour has on other people.” SRO

Examples include SROs giving presentations to law classes, to newcomers, and at elementary school about internet safety, bullying, child pornography and the sharing of intimate images, and to groups of students in conflict with the law. Other presentations might be given to respond to need - for example, a presentation on vaping or drug use.

Survey respondents indicated a higher level of support for having police involved in educational activities such as presentations about safety and the law or sharing information about the criminal justice process than other activities, but even these questions had a substantial percentage of respondents who questioned and disagreed with police involvement in this function.

A substantial number of participants in the student, parent, community member and employee sessions, as well as in the survey, indicated concern about this practice and expressed a preference to have educational information in classrooms shared by stakeholders other than police.

“My SRO would come in for assemblies and we did not typically have SROs roaming the hallways. A lot of very scary comments would come from police officers and led us to believe that police were not to be trusted because they would tell us things using the threat of jail. We all became fearful.” Former Student

“On one of our PD Days we had a police officer come in and deliver an educational session. It was one of the worst experiences I have had in PD. They

³² HWDSB Literature Review (2021) at p. 11 citing Kupchik, A. and Fisher, B. (2020). Police Ambassadors: Student-Police Interactions in School and Legal Socialization citing Desmond et al 2016 https://219751e2-9443-42c7-8c01-a1083bc8150f.filesusr.com/ugd/46d76f_1c2ae9239e51427aa4dab6b5ff8825e5.pdf

played upon racial prejudices and poverty. Some of the videos were incredibly stigmatizing, reinforcing all of the stereotypes that they were trying to move away from.” Former Employee

“Police teaching youth the pathways to their career isn’t a relevant reason to be in schools. Even when there is a violent conflict in the school, why is an enforcement approach being prioritized, when there are other ways that don’t criminalize youth, especially racialized people who are being impacted by this?” Racialized Parent

“We don’t need police officers to teach us about education and safety because they are the main reason we feel unsafe. Police need to repair the harm outside of the school, not inside the school. If it’s about trying to promote positive messages in schools you are asking these children to accept a distorted view of what police officers are like which is different to what they experience in the community. He’s been harassed and criminalized in the school even though he has no criminal record. We’re asking people to examine white supremacy. Our children do not need to be policed or labeled by teachers.” Somali Parent

Concerns were not limited to perceptions alone. A practice was described that raises questions about issues of consent and the creation of a direct risk of harm for students. The SRO is sometimes brought in to talk to groups of at-risk students in direct opposition to their express wishes not to interact with a police officer for fear of being labelled “narc” by their peers. This was done out of the belief that a positive relationship with police was important and beneficial, so the staff member organized for the SRO to attend meetings with the students without notice. This raises concerns about consent, about mandatory engagement with police in an educational setting and how this might drive a student to disengage from the educational setting. It also shows some disregard for concerns raised about being labelled a “narc” by others, some of whom may be in a position to cause real, physical harm to the student. This was done in favour of prioritizing the development of positive police-student relationships.

Concrete examples were also shared that demonstrated a disconnect between information shared in presentations and OCDSB’s commitment to creating a culture of caring and social responsibility and the perpetuation of harmful stereotypes around race, socioeconomic status and sexuality.

A former student described the lasting, harmful impact that a school-wide assembly delivered by the SRO on child pornography had on them.

“The SRO told us that when girls take nudes for their boyfriends they are risking criminal charges. We were taught that in these cases girls have not only produced child pornography, they have also distributed it. They told everyone that the boys will share it with their friends. And when this happens not only will girls have to face the shame of pictures being online for all to see but also legal repercussions. This talk was to discourage teenage girls from taking and sending nude pictures. I have spoken with high school peers and hardly any of the boys remember this speech. Each and every one of my girlfriends remember it clearly. It relied on rape culture narratives that blame the victims of revenge porn and mislabel them as the perpetrators and sexual offenders.” 2SLGBTQ+ Former Student

They went on to describe the devastating impact:

“So what did I do when my word spread that my first boyfriend shared my nude pictures with his friends after I broke up with him? I cried for hours and told NO adult. Not one teacher, parent or police officer because I feared I would be arrested. I blamed myself. I called myself a whore. I believed it when people called me a slut. I became very depressed and started using drugs and alcohol to mask my pain and deal with my shame... And that is exactly what my SRO upheld in that assembly. It was one of the main experiences that taught me to blame myself. I never saw that SRO or any cop for that matter, as someone I could go to about these events. I expected them to reinforce the ideas they had already solidified in my mind. I broke the law by taking a nude picture as a minor. It was my fault. I deserved this. I broke the law by drinking under age and using drugs. It was my fault. I deserved this.” 2SLGBTQ+ Former Student

In another example of an unintended, harmful impact arose from comments made by an SRO when giving a presentation to a social science class. The students questioned a recent incident at another school that received media attention and involved the targeting of a racialized student by a police officer, and the SRO reportedly responded by denying the existence of racism in Canada and indicating in essence, that racialized people commit more crimes.

What is so troubling about this incident, is the complete unawareness of the damage that had been caused. At the time the SRO informed other adults at the school that the presentation went really well; meanwhile the students, many of whom were racialized, were so traumatized by the response that a significant number of interventions by the school were subsequently required to address the harm. This disconnect in perceptions about a singular intervention are indicative of many of the challenges identified with OCDSB's current use of police in schools. Benefits are assumed based on a hypothesis that has not been evaluated until now for its impact on Indigenous, Black and marginalized students.

“The SRO said it went really well ... It didn't go well at all. Kids were re-traumatized by the experience at [the other school] and from the students' perspective there was a lot of deflection and failure to address the racism - platitudes about racism and police not being racist or seeing colour.” Employee

“... three students left the room in tears and many inside were traumatized.” Employee

“When a police officer comes into a diverse classroom to give a presentation, you would think they would try to keep even their unconscious biases in check, wouldn't you? I mean, there had been a whole police-related incident ... close to our school ... only a short time before. People were feeling a little upset. Having a question about what the police are doing to combat racism eventually led into, in essence, a statement that Black people commit more crime is just not ok.” Student

“We invite people into our school to support us and the messaging that goes out may not always be the messaging that we intend to go out.” Employee

These negative impacts expressed are exactly aligned with research observations that found that when SROs act as a type of police ambassador, it is harmful to marginalized students

because it teaches them that police involvement is a result of criminal behaviour alone and it causes them to internalize negative labels causing lower self-esteem.³³

Specifically, when SROs intentionally teach students that legal issues arise only out of criminal behaviour they are at the same time working on dismissing concerns about biased policing towards racialized or marginalized communities. They may do this by pointing out that the media often portrays the police negatively and that those sorts of action were the responsibility of a “few bad apples” rather than acknowledging the possibility that policing tends to be disproportionately directed towards racialized people.³⁴

“Again, we heard no discussion among SROs of the possibility that policing tends to be disproportionately directed at people of color, despite evidence showing this to be the case (e.g., Kochel et al. 2011). Rather, the SROs taught an opposite message—that policing and the law in general were fair and neutral, with problems (e.g., being arrested) the result of individuals’ criminality alone.”³⁵

Other researchers found that these educational strategies that failed to acknowledge the need for reform within the police and placed the responsibility for engagement with the police on individuals rather than the police themselves were “a real threat to reforms of police practices that might have been a chance of improving the fairness and racial equity of police work”.³⁶

Suggestions for the way forward. The OCDSB should strongly consider ending the practice of using police to give presentations to schools and classrooms and also end the practice of bringing in the police to speak to a student or family one-on-one as part of the progressive discipline process e.g. speaking with a student or family about the potential consequences of their actions.

Support to victims of crime

Administrators valued the support that SROs have provided to students who had intimate images posted on the internet without their consent. In particular, administrators highly valued the ability of the SROs to use their computer to remove the images from the internet. Administrators also placed value on the support SROs provided to help students report or

³³ Kupchik, A. and Fisher, B. (2020). Police Ambassadors: Student-Police Interactions in School and Legal Socialization.

https://219751e2-9443-42c7-8c01-a1083bc8150f.filesusr.com/ugd/46d76f_1c2ae9239e51427aa4dab6b5f8825e5.pdf

³⁴ HWDSB Literature Review (2021) at p. 11 citing Kupchik, A. and Fisher, B. (2020). Police Ambassadors: Student-Police Interactions in School and Legal Socialization citing Desmond et al 2016 https://219751e2-9443-42c7-8c01-a1083bc8150f.filesusr.com/ugd/46d76f_1c2ae9239e51427aa4dab6b5f8825e5.pdf

³⁵ Kupchik, A. and Fisher, B. (2020). Police Ambassadors: Student-Police Interactions in School and Legal Socialization at p. 414.

https://219751e2-9443-42c7-8c01-a1083bc8150f.filesusr.com/ugd/46d76f_1c2ae9239e51427aa4dab6b5f8825e5.pdf

³⁶ HWDSB Literature Review (2021) at p. 10 citing Kupchik, A. and Fisher, B. (2020). Police Ambassadors: Student-Police Interactions in School and Legal Socialization at p. 416.

https://219751e2-9443-42c7-8c01-a1083bc8150f.filesusr.com/ugd/46d76f_1c2ae9239e51427aa4dab6b5f8825e5.pdf

address incidents of sexual assault, relationship-based violence and instances of suspected human trafficking. All of these are mandatory reasons to notify the police.

Value was placed by administrators on the ability of the SRO to engage with both the student and their families and provide necessary guidance and support. These perceptions are consistent with information provide shared by SROs. SROs, administrators and employees cited examples of times a victim had come forward and either reported the incident to a trusted adult at the school or requested to speak with a police officer (the SRO). There is a belief amongst administrators and SROs that students would not have gone to the police station to report the crime. High praise was given for the professionalism of the specialized police officers with the Sexual Assault and Child Abuse Unit when the SROs referred cases on to them for investigation.

Providing support to victims of crime was more highly supported by survey respondents than other activities. There were, however, a high level of reservations expressed about police involvement in this type of activity, particularly by members of the Black community, 2SLGBTQ+ community and people with disabilities.

Table 8: Percentage of respondents who *do not agree*³⁷ with having police involved in specific activities or see police involvement as a last resort

Type of Activity	All Respondents	Indigenous	Black	Middle Eastern	Muslim	Disabilities	2SLGBTQ+
Support victims of sexual assault	40%	42%	55%	32%	32%	49%	61%
Support victims of crime	39%	44%	53%	31%	31%	48%	60%

In other forums, concerns were raised about the interactions that administrators permitted SROs to have with victims of these crimes. Concerns were raised about

- lack of consent of the child before contacting the police
- lack of parental or guardian consent before having the child speak to police
- failure of the principal to act in *loco parentis* for the child and act as their advocate when parents and guardians were not contacted
- SROs speaking alone to children
- failure to take a child-centred and victim-centred approach
- male SROs interviewing young girls who were victims of sexual and gender-based crimes
- victim blaming (particularly in relation to the unauthorized sharing of intimate images);
- interrogation of the victim rather than starting from a place of belief
- lack of culturally relevant non-police support made available to support the child through the process.

One specific example shared with the reviewer involved a young, developmentally delayed Indigenous child who was the victim of a sexual assault. This experience highlighted the

³⁷ Includes respondents who selected strongly disagree, disagree, not sure, only as a last resort or who prefer it to be handled by non-police

intersection of each of the concerns raised above and the importance of having a person specialized in supporting victims of sexual crimes engage with the child, and the need to reinforce the responsibility of the administrator to act in *loco parentis* and as an advocate for the child, if their parent or guardian is not present.

“I’m confused about the role that the SROs play when there is a sexual assault investigation. In some instances our administrators wear the mistakes that SROs make. I think, in general, these should go directly through to SACA because they are the experts.” Employee

Suggestions for the way forward. The concerns raised highlight the need to take a child-rights, survivor-centred approach when supporting survivors of sexual and gender-based violence. Practice changes suggested include (a) being guided by the fundamental rights of the child including their right to have their opinion asked for and valued in accordance with their developmental stage in relation to police involvement. This includes informed consent from the child before contacting the police; (b) ensuring that parents or guardians consent to having the police speak to their child and that the parent/guardian or a trusted adult is with the child as their advocate throughout the process; (c) ensuring that culturally relevant support and accompaniment as an advocate for the child is offered and provided. This could be offered through existing staffing or through community partnerships; (d) that prior to contact the police, administrators advise the child and their parents of the option to request a police officer of their preferred gender prior to contacting the police and respecting their preference. Adjustment to these suggestions would need to be made to adapt to situations where the child may be at risk if the parent were involved. In that case, another trusted adult of the child’s choice should support the child instead.

Lockdown and lockdown drills

The use of police to practice lockdown drills was supported by some respondents to the survey, but there reservations were expressed by Indigenous, Black, people with disabilities and 2SLGBTQ+ people. Actual lockdown incidents (not drills) were recognized as an area of acceptable police involvement when they were responding to significant safety concerns.

Table 9: Percentage of respondents who *do not agree*³⁸ with having police involved in specific activities or see police involvement as a last resort

Type of Activity	All Respondents	Indigenous	Black	Middle Eastern	Muslim	Disabilities	2SLGBTQ+
Lockdown drills	39%	54%	53%	28%	30%	49%	62%

Students with a history of trauma or who are triggered by police shared some personal experiences. A 2SLGBTQ+ student described being terrified in primary school when they didn’t realize that a lockdown had been called and they stumbled across the SRO with their hand on their gun, in the hallway.

³⁸ Includes respondents who selected strongly disagree, disagree, not sure, only as a last resort or who prefer it to be handled by non-police

“I really don’t think that police officers should have guns in school. I was in grade 3 at the time. It was terrifying.” 2SLGBTQ+ Student

A parent of a child with disabilities, with a significant history of trauma with the police removing him from his biological family, and was known to become extremely triggered by the sight of police, related their difficulty in getting the administration to communicate in advance when lockdown drills would be happening so that the parent could keep him home. The parent was told she couldn’t be informed in advance because the drill needed to simulate a real-life crisis. On one occasion her child unexpectedly came across the SRO in the hallway and fled. The parent came to school to help search for him.

“He was on a path, hiding. He told me that the police had come to school to get him.” Parent of Student with Disabilities

Suggestions for the way forward. These stories and experiences highlight the need for awareness of the trauma that police officers represent for some children and the need for OCDSB to take action to minimize the harm through reduction in contact and better communication between the school and families about police involvement in schools. The OCDSB should give consideration to not involving police in lockdown drills. If police are involved in lockdown drills, then the OCDSB should ensure that communication to both families and students about the upcoming drill is conveyed in advance so that children are aware and can make arrangements to avoid it if the experience is triggering. Consideration should be given to students being permitted to be marked absent, without penalty if they opt out.

Visible presence outside school

Feedback from students, parents, staff and community members at Gloucester and Ridgemont High Schools confirmed a highly visible police presence outside both schools. Feedback from the consultations also confirmed a visible police presence at Woodroffe High School and Sir Guy Carleton Secondary School. To get a full understanding of how this high police presence may impact on Indigenous, Black and marginalized students it is important to understand the demographics of these schools, compared to the demographics of the OCDSB population at large. As can be seen below, the higher level of police presence observed by the community is associated with schools that have a higher population of Indigenous, Black, and marginalized students.

Table 10: Demographics of Gloucester, Ridgemont, Sir Guy Carleton and Woodroffe High Schools compared to OCDSB population at large

Student Demographics	Specific High Schools	OCDSB Wide
Indigenous	7.6%	3.5%
Black	18.1%	8.6%
Middle Eastern	22.9%	14.7%
First Language Arabic	18.3%	9.3%

First Language Somali	5%	1.1%
Muslim	35.8%	19.3%
Refugee	9%	5.8%
Disability	9.9%	9.0%

SROs reportedly park their vehicles in parking spaces in front of the school and sit inside their vehicles at the busiest time of day, observing students and their families coming and going. At times the SRO will park the vehicle at the front doors of the school, not in a parking place.

The regular visibility of the police vehicle in front of the school caused considerable concern for many of the people who participated in the consultations. There were significant concerns raised about the stigma the visible police presence has on the reputation of the school. There were concerns raised about the surveillance and information being gathered. There were also significant concerns raised that the visibility of the police vehicle reinforces negative stereotypes and perceptions about the Indigenous, Black and racialized population that attends the school and lives in the neighbourhood that surrounds these schools. These are discussed in more detail in the section below and in **Appendix 11** which takes a detailed look at feedback about Gloucester and Ridgmont High Schools and the schools in their catchment area.

“Having a police car parked out front continues a reputation that you cannot outrun.” Employee

Suggestions for the way forward. The OCDSB should take immediate steps to end the practice of having police cars parked at schools, unless the police are responding to a call for service. If the call for service is not an emergency, police vehicles should always be parked in a parking space, and not at the front doors of the school. Meetings that may be necessary between the police and administrators should take place over the phone or off-site, wherever possible.

PERSPECTIVES ON COLLECTIVE IMPACT OF POLICE INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOL

Overwhelmingly, the narrative that came forward from students, parents, community members and some employees was one of harm. This narrative was reflected in a substantial amount of feedback provided in the survey. This indicates that police presence in OCDSB schools is causing harm to a substantial number of Indigenous, Black, and marginalized community members. The following summarizes the types of impact identified.

Safety

The impact of police presence on safety emerged as a consistent theme throughout the discussions. The agreements between police and educational institutions are premised on the assumption that increased police involvement in schools will result in increased safety. This assumption and the understanding of safety it rests upon have since been challenged. Other considerations, such as psychological, physical, and emotional safety, particularly for Indigenous, Black, and marginalized communities were raised in criticisms of the assumed connection between police presence and overall safety. Throughout the consultation process, 2SLGBTQ+ people and people who experience barriers related to their abilities also voiced this

broader understanding of safety. While not one consistent definition of safety emerged, it was clear that one's experience of safety in relation to police involvement in schools is deeply rooted in Indigeneity, race, sexual orientation, gender identity, and ability.³⁹

Indigenous, Black and marginalized participants widely described feeling “terrified” “uncomfortable” “traumatized” “awkward” “threatened” “worried” “anxious” “scared” “unsafe” “fearful” “afraid” by police presence in school.

“I know that some of my friends get really anxious and don't feel welcome at school when they see uniformed officers.” Indigenous Student

“Having police officers in schools brings an area of negativity and the sense that the students cannot be trusted ...they shouldn't be a constant shadow over the students as if they are looking for something to happen.” Black Student

“I do not feel safe with police inside a school. In my experience, police officers uphold unjust laws often by violence, and targeting racialized youth... if the District continues the partnership with SROs, this affords the Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) another reason to distrust the school board.” Indigenous Student

“I am extremely uncomfortable around police officers, as are most students I know. They make me feel unsafe in my own school more than any student ever has.” 2SLGBTQ+ Student

“Our kids were terrified watching what was happening to George Floyd, and how he died. When you see the police this is what comes to mind.” Somali Parent

“Having police in schools is almost like having someone who's abusing you in there and asking them to interact with them and be friendly. Outside the education environment they are not allied with you so making people interact is not ok.” Black Employee

“I get feedback from BIPOC students who have told me how it made them feel to have a police officer in school. Some are newcomers and they come to school for that sense of safety. When they see an armed officer they are almost in crisis. They are scared and come to my office for support. Newcomers with a trauma history are not primed to have police come into schools and when they see an officer they are terrified. It's re-traumatizing ... it doesn't become easier for them. They duck into the washroom and peek around the corner to avoid them. It's having a huge impact based on what I've seen in the school.” Employee

“Even if we aren't criminals there are police that will be prejudiced against us and harm people of colour like what happened with George and Brianna. I think that's why we worry when we see the police.” Black Student

“I don't agree with having police in schools. Having police in the schools shows that schools are unsafe. That they are violent. Having police in the

³⁹ Paragraph taken from consultation summary report prepared by Denney Resources Inc.

neighbourhood and the schools terrifies students. It puts fear into the hearts of the students.” Somali Community Member

“I once brought the officer into an Indigenous space and it triggered the child and the child walked out of the room. I would never bring a police officer in again without letting the students know first.” Administrator

Some people came forward during discussions to express that police presence in the school created a sense of safety for them. A few of these same students were surprised to learn that not all schools had the same level of police presence as their own schools. A question heard echoed by many, was safety for who?

“Some students may be comfortable but who are we prioritizing - the kids who are ok with it or the ones who fear everything when they see a cop? What does that say?” Arabic parent and former student

“Who is it emotionally reassuring in the school for? It’s not for this community. We need to reimagine what safety looks like. For our communities it doesn’t protect our children; it doesn’t make us feel safe.” Somali Parent

Participants suggested that the presence of armed police affected their academic performance and reduced their sense of psychological safety, in particular for Indigenous, Black and racialized students.

“They try to make students feel safe. There is a disconnect between policy and reality. Someone carrying a weapon can use it.” Black Student

“I feel uncomfortable around officers, especially when they are armed.” Black Student

“Police officers make students feel like they are in the wrong. That can take a toll on mental health.” Black Student

“When a police officer makes his presence known, the atmosphere amongst the students completely shifts.” Racialized Student

When asked about whether police presence in schools makes schools a safer place, 38% of respondents disagreed. Breaking this down further, when we looked at this by identity, 43% Indigenous, 62% Black, 33% Middle Eastern, 36% Muslim, 48% people with disabilities, and 68% 2SLGBTQ+ disagreed with the statement.

The fundamental assumption that schools in urban areas with higher populations of racialized students require extra policing in order to maintain a safe environment is not supported by evidence. In fact information shared as part of the review process indicated that higher suspension rates and discipline is more attributable to leadership style than indicative of unsafe student behaviour.

One employee commented:

“Ridgemont is the school I’ve worked at with the least number of kids engaged in behaviour that requires administrator interference... It’s baffling to me that at some point someone thought they needed more police.” Employee

Stigma

The regular presence of SROs at schools in urban areas with low socioeconomic status and higher populations of Indigenous, Black and racialized community members reinforces the wrong perception that Indigenous, Black and racialized people are dangerous. It reinforces the wrong perception that Indigenous, Black and racialized people are criminals. It reinforces the intergenerational stigma that these high schools are dangerous, that the communities that surround them are dangerous and that the Indigenous, Black and racialized people who live in these communities are dangerous. This has a very real and negative impact on the students who attend these schools. Students conveyed feeling ashamed and finding themselves in the position of constantly having to defend their school and their choice to attend their home school. They conveyed feelings of wanting to be proud of their school, but the ever present stigma surrounding the schools does not allow it. It has become so entrenched that elementary school parents are reportedly making purposeful decisions to remove their children from OCDSB and enrol them in another District to avoid sending their children here.

“...the fact that we have decided to put much needed money into funding an SRO program in Gloucester and Ridgemont, the optics of it causes people to make assumptions about what kind of school it is and what kind of kids go there and “ghettoizes” the kids... My daughter walks to Gloucester every day and on a lot of those days sees police officers in the parking lot. She is very conscious of contact between police and Indigenous people and racialized groups. She wants to get to be a kid and not wonder why police are out there. She wants to be proud of her school.” Indigenous Parent

“There are police cars in front of our school or hiding behind a restaurant. Their eyes were always on us. Lot of issues in Black community and feel like they are constantly watching us because they don’t trust us. Was driving with my mother one night and was followed by the police for a good 5 minutes before driving away.” Black Student

“As a new Canadian with not much experience with police, I thought there might be crime in the school if police are present.” Newcomer Student

“I heard so many bad things about Ridgemont before coming but it’s actually okay. It just goes to show how people view us.” Black Student

“I heard the same [so many bad things] about Gloucester High School - people tried to get me to go somewhere else.” Indigenous Student

“Half of my middle school goes to Cairine Wilson and the other half goes to Gloucester. People have a view of Gloucester High School and Ridgemont High School as not being good schools. Not true. It is frustrating.” Student

“Most of my class went to Ridgemont. Lot of them left and went to Catholic school. Their mother said Ridgemont was bad. There is a big issue at the Catholic school. People have been rude. Catholic school has lots of white

people but it is still bad. People should go to the schools and see for themselves.” Black Student

“The fact that there is extra SRO presence in both Ridgemont and Gloucester only reflected negatively and is an even clearer indication of the problem with this program. Whether it’s intended or not, the optics and the message is that those particular communities which are the majority in those schools need extra policing!” Somali Community Member

“There have been times in my student life where police officers have physically pulled me out of the classroom. This strained my relationships with teachers and peers.” Indigenous Student

When asked what they thought the impact was of having police present in schools, 31% Indigenous, 52% Black, 38% Middle Eastern, 38% Muslim, 34% people with disabilities and 39% 2SLGBTQ+ respondents felt like it contributed to the school having a bad reputation. Overall 28% of the respondents felt that police presence contributed to stigma.

The Provincial Protocol identifies police visibility as a way to prevent violence in school.⁴⁰ When discussing the work of SROs, the OPS sees the visible police presence as a form of community building. In interviews with staff, this was also identified as an impetus behind the priority SRO program when it was initiated - to establish the school as a hub for all community services, including the police. What became clear from listening to students and their families, community and employees, was the wide disconnect between the perceptions of the OCDSB and the OPS and the experiences of the students and community members they serve. It was clear that the intention did not align with the impact.

In fact, the visible police presence outside of schools was identified by many participants as perpetuating stigma against the racialized students who attend these schools. The daily presence of police cars both in parking places and parked directly in front of the front doors of the school sends the wrong message to people passing by, that violent incidents requiring a police response are in progress or that the visible police presence is required to stop violent children from committing crimes. Both of these perceptions perpetuate racism against Indigenous, Black and racialized bodies as being violent and criminals.

Surveillance and Over Policing

Indigenous, Black and racialized students, parents, caregivers and community members identified that they feel targeted and surveilled by the presence of SROs at the school. They expressed that this is a continuation and extension of the over-surveillance and over policing of racialized communities in the neighbourhoods where they live. Parents and children spoke of never being able to escape the feeling of being watched by police. They spoke of leaving their homes and walking down the street and seeing police officers and being followed. They spoke of going to the parks to play basketball and having police officers and vehicles parked watching them play. Then they spoke of arriving and leaving school and having it happen again. Police cars parked out front at the busy times of days; police officers at the front doors greeting them when they arrive and leave. Police officers at the school on the first day back from school

⁴⁰ Provincial Model for a Local Police/School Board Protocol, (2015) at para. 7 <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/brochure/protocol/locprote.pdf>

closure after the pandemic closures. They spoke about feeling intensely uncomfortable, in an educational setting that was supposed to be peaceful, welcoming and inviting them to learn.

“... As racialized people we don’t want surveillance as a part of our lives. To be watched by police officers in schools and in the community is an amount of surveillance Black kids don’t need.” Black Former Student and Parent

“The first day back to school for my children this fall there was a police officer on the grounds. Children were returning for the first time since the pandemic started. There were many rules to coming back to school. Kids were nervous. The first person to be noticed on the school grounds was a police officer. Throughout the pandemic there has been serious concerns about using police to manage a public health crisis, and we were very disappointed to see this brought to our school.” 2SLGBTQ+ Parent

“Many of us are also from the same communities with extra police surveillance. We have a Muslim group here. It is important to look at Ottawa demographics. We are over represented. A significant portion of the Black community is Muslim. They are overrepresented in low income areas of the city. Middle Eastern men are 12 times as likely to be stopped by police. One in 5 kids identify as Muslim in Ottawa, including Black and racialized kids. Lots of police involvement at playgrounds in low income neighbourhoods. Community neighbourhoods and mosques are over-policed on many fronts. It is violent to have SROs in uniform and with guns in schools.” Muslim Employee

Some shared that the relationship between school and the family is meant to be a partnership built on trust, but that bringing police into the school breaks that trust and damages the relationship. The link between being racialized and being surveilled was made by many, with reference to the high proportion of racialized students at the schools with the highest police presence. Students spoke about the psychological impacts of feeling “watched” and the negative effects this has on their ability to feel a deeper sense of belonging in the school community.

“There are concerns regarding certain neighbourhoods. They are considered as tougher neighborhoods. Police presence in those neighbourhoods is very high and students who live there see police on every corner. They develop fear. At school they should feel at home, learning, and at peace. But they are terrified. Everywhere they go makes them feel terrified.” Somali Community Member

“Sometimes when I see police, I wonder if they think I did something wrong. They take things to the extreme. The teacher says at least we are not in America. I feel annoyed when people say things like that. Do we really all have the same rights? We have issues in Ottawa but they don’t talk about that.” Black Student

“We keep expressing this. We’ve been asking for this for many years. We do not want police in schools. You send the message that our voices don’t matter and our children need to be surveilled. It’s such a dehumanizing process to share with our kids why people think they need to be surveilled.” Somali Parent

Feelings of safety were linked to the intergenerational trauma of residential schools and colonialism experienced by Indigenous peoples. They were linked to trauma experienced by newcomers arriving from war torn countries. It was linked to the direct experiences of Indigenous, Black and marginalized students and families who had family members arrested, homes searched, people tasered, loved ones gone missing and not searched for, children taken into care, being racially profiled and followed, of being wrongfully accused.

“As an Indigenous parent who has a long standing mistrust of the police and of being surveilled ... I have tried not to pass it on but intergenerational stuff happens and that never leaves her. So when she goes to Gloucester that is what she feels and that is her experience.” Indigenous Parent

“As an Indigenous woman it is not the officer that is the question, it is the colonial history of the police. Wearing a uniform is not a signal of trust and safety. Indigenous people have been over policed for generations. Our hesitation to approach the police is justified. I teach my girls not to answer the door if the police come to my home. Police should not talk to children or ask for their help. The police state is not something we can put our trust in. In police officer and police union culture it is rare for police to be held accountable.” Indigenous Parent

“Police are good for solving problems like threats inside the schools but those problems will rarely happen. When the police are just on standby, people and especially fellow people of colour, won’t feel safe because of the history with police (specifically their power abuse) and massive distrust.” Black Student

These experiences were reflected in the survey responses from students, parents and community members. When asked whether having police in schools makes them feel targeted or watched, 31% of Indigenous respondents, 56% of Black respondents, 32% of Middle Eastern respondents, 40% of Muslim respondents, 38% of people with disabilities and 54% of 2SLGBTQ+ people agreed with the statement. Overall 29% of survey respondents agreed they felt targeted or watched by police in schools.

There was a recognition by participants throughout the consultation that the over policing of particular schools and neighbourhoods was intrinsically linked to race and socioeconomic status.

I am also very aware of the disproportionate impact of police responses to some racialized communities and First Nations people... There is also a bias about the kids that attend [Gloucester and Ridgemont High Schools], where they live, where they come from.” Indigenous Student

“Targeted surveillance at schools is so obvious to our children and they internalize these messages” Somali Parent

“Schools with Black students are being targeted more.” Black Student

“Police officers are present in schools with a larger BIPOC population.” Black Student

“I am Chinese. My family members may not be targeted by SROs but they see it happen to their friends because people from different backgrounds are treated differently. It is very clear to us who gets singled out.” Racialized Parent

“There is an obvious difference [at our school compared to schools without a high police presence]. Gloucester High School and Ridgemont High School are predominantly people of colour and low income. They never give a clear answer as to why there are no police at other schools.” Black Student

Criminalization

Participants in the discussions also expressed that the presence of police officers in schools perpetuates the criminalization of Indigenous, Black and racialized children. Poignantly, participants highlighted the feeling that there was no room to make mistakes and be a child. Students expressed fear that behaviour that should typically be dealt with by the school, becomes stigmatized and criminalized in the eyes of others when police become involved in the progressive discipline process.

“Students are not given the opportunity to learn and grow from their mistakes like Indigenous communities do.” Indigenous Parent

“Children are being robbed of childhood, of making mistakes and the ability to learn from mistakes organically. This is necessary for cognitive development. Negative police interactions induce trauma on young minds. Further, a child shouldn’t be labeled “bad” so long as an officer’s memory exists or employment lasts... often into adulthood. Racialized children especially need to be allowed childhood.” Racialized Parent

“It makes me feel targeted, like because I am a person of colour I am supposed to mess up.” Racialized Student

“Racism is evident in the enforcement of the law. When the police are brought into a school to deal with a student’s behaviour, the perception of the situation in the eyes of the school community is tainted thereby changing the nature of the event into a criminalized occurrence.” Indigenous Student

“Police don’t belong in schools. Kids were afraid. Black students were targeted for playing around.” 2SLGBTQ+ Student

There isn’t anything at our schools going on that is so serious that it requires police to sit and patrol there 24/7. I would feel safer if me and my peers weren’t being treated like we are criminals meant to mess up.” Indigenous Student

Concerns were heard that the involvement of police in school means that student names become known to the police over time because of the police involvement in progressive discipline at school. This increases exposure of the child to the criminal justice process. Some participants identified the “*school to prison pipeline*” and linked experiences of biased and prejudiced discipline practices towards Indigenous, Black and marginalized students from the moment they enter school to the ultimate pushing them out of the educational environment leading to the criminalization of Indigenous, Black and marginalized students.

“Police officers use information that they get from minors and can use it in court to convict them. This concerns us.” 2SLGBTQ+ Student

“There is over policing. Kids are new; don't speak the language; don't understand the culture and before you know it the kids do something both in the neighbourhood and school. We all know that certain neighbourhoods are overpoliced and before you know if the child is “known to the police”.” Somali Parent

“Having police exposes Black and racialized students to higher exposure to criminality because of hyper surveillance. There is an obvious difference. GHS and RHS are predominantly people of colour and low income. They never give a clear answer as to why there are no police at other schools.” Racialized Student

“Police officers should be called after a crime. Not to look for a crime that hasn't been committed.” Black Student

“When we say it is a choice to call security or the police for anything, what does that say? Administrators are using the choice to call police on kids. Criminalization is a process and it begins from daycare - from my own experience it begins there. Black bodies, racialized bodies and Indigenous bodies, especially, are seen as a threat.” Arabic Parent

“There was a disagreement with a teacher for a child who was new to the country and he was arrested and sent to jail. This is not the right result. The impact on the school culture was terrible. It affected him psychologically and he dropped out of school and went down a bad path and ended up in jail. Before calling the police the school administration needs to explain why they need to have the police in schools.” Somali Community Member

“I oppose police in schools because it creates the school to prison pipeline which is a system that impacts BIPOC and pushes them from school to the criminal injustice system.” Arabic Parent and Former Student

“Arab, Black and Indigenous people are viewed as a threat and are treated as criminals, even when they are youth.” Arabic Parent and Former Student

“What is the message that we are sending to our students? That we have to treat them like criminals from day one?” Racialized Employee

“When students are always being surrounded by police presence we feel like we are in a school where criminals are. That's how some of the students feel. The fact that they're in an environment meant for learning but surrounded by police it's detrimental to their health and to their mental well being ... They shouldn't be policed. They haven't done anything wrong. Police can smile and wave all they want but everyone knows that they are there because they think the students are going to be criminals and if you treat people like criminals they will become criminals. We see over policing in Black neighbourhoods and under policing and it's not creating change” Black Former Student

Concerns expressed in consultations are consistent with observations that researchers have been making for years. Robyn Maynard, her in book *Policing Black Lives*⁴¹ noted formal surveillance and criminalization occur within the public school system. This is done by exposing racialized and marginalized youth to further encounters with the police by mandating police presence in schools and making frequent calls for service. This mandated police presence in school has “made Black and other racialized youth increasingly vulnerable to criminalization”.⁴²

Maynard goes on to note the link between disciplinary policies, and in particular suspensions and expulsions, and the “grossly disproportionate encounters between Black youth and the criminal justice system”⁴³ citing extremely damaging, life changing impacts on reducing graduation rates and their direct correlation to ending up in prison.

“It is well-established in the research literature and by educational advocates that there is a link between the use of punitive disciplinary measures and subsequent patterns of criminal supervision and incarceration.”⁴⁴

Factors contributing to criminalization include systemic racism that is pushing these students out of school.

“White-run public schools largely remain a site of racialized violence for many marginalized students. Black youth are exposed to a “hostile environment” in which they undergo “psychological damage, emotional pain, and ... personal humiliation” due to racially discriminatory treatment (Cudjoe 2001: 349, 351) by those tasked with their education. For this reason, many youth disengage from school entirely. While it is frequently referred to as “dropping out” this language disguises the structural racism both inside and outside of the education system that impacts Black children’s ability to remain in school. It presumes an individual problem found in these Black boys and girls, while erasing the contextual factors within school and society that contribute to this phenomenon (Dei et. al. 1997).”⁴⁵

The factors identified by Maynard are present at the OCDSB. Recent data⁴⁶ tells us that Indigenous students are 3.5 times more likely, Black students 1.8 times more likely, and Middle Eastern 2.0 times more likely, to get a suspension than their proportion of the population would expect. Extending this analysis to gender identity and disability we can also see the same factors at play with gender diverse students being 1.9 times more likely to be suspended and students with disabilities ranging from 2.7 to 6.6 times more likely to be suspended. Combining this information with the fact that schools with the highest proportion of racialized students are the schools with the highest police presence in OCDSB is concerning as it points to an environment where Indigenous, Black and marginalized students may be pushed out and left at risk of exposure to the criminal justice system.

⁴¹Robyn Maynard, *Policing Black Lives: State Violence in Canada from Slavery to the Present* (Halifax and Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2017).

⁴² Maynard, *Policing Black Lives*, 220.

⁴³ Maynard, *Policing Black Lives*, 221.

⁴⁴ Maynard, *Policing Black Lives*, 221 citing Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw. 2015. *Black Lives Matter: The Schott 50 State Report on Public Education and Black Males*. Cambridge: Schott Foundation for Public Education.

⁴⁵ Maynard, *Policing Black Lives*, 221.

⁴⁶ OCDSB 2019-2020 Student Suspension Report at p. 5

<https://pub-ocdsb.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=8618>

Students, parents and staff members shared real examples of how police involvement at their schools is impacting negatively on achievement. These included examples of students feeling vigilant and being unable to concentrate and impacts on attendance. In one case, a child stopped engaging entirely in online teaching for a course after an SRO was sent to their home, unannounced, for a wellness check. The family believed that the school had broken trust and reported them to the police.

“If you feel unsafe because of the police it will hinder your learning.” Student

“... many Black parents need to have conversations with children to help them be prepared for any engagement with law enforcement, which is a life or death conversation. How can we say that students can learn when they can look out the door of their classroom and see an officer walking down the hallway? The trigger derails their learning for an untold period of time. We shouldn’t normalize the presence of police in our schools.” Black Employee

“Kids don’t come to school because they aren’t comfortable seeing police walking around their schools because they have had guns held to their heads in their own country.” Black Employee

“The circumstances I encountered were mostly in terms of attendance. As soon as an SRO would be in the school, kids who had had negative interactions with the police would just get up and go and leave.” Former Employee

Survey feedback confirmed what was raised in the consultations by students, families and employees with a concerning percentage of respondents indicating that the police presence at the school made them not simply uncomfortable, but uncomfortable to attend school. This result should give OCDSB considerable pause, as anything interfering with the desire of a child to attend school and learn, should be raising red flags, as it is creating a barrier for them to equally access their right to education.

Table 11: Survey participants who indicated they were uncomfortable to attend school due to the police officer’s presence

Description	All	Indigenous	Black	Middle Eastern	Muslim	Disabilities	2SLGB TQ+
Uncomfortable to attend school	20%	28%	48%	17%	26%	30%	39%

CONNECTING PERSPECTIVES TO OCDSB POLICY AND PRACTICE

The individual experiences and perspectives shared and their collective impact indicate a pressing need to reconsider how OCDSB is involving police in school, when their involvement is activated, and to identify non-police options instead.

Systemic racism, discrimination and bias

Underlying concerns of safety, stigma, surveillance, over policing and criminalization and threaded throughout the discussions during the review were concerns about systemic racism, discrimination and bias. The *Anti-Racism Act*⁴⁷ recognizes in its preamble that systemic racism is often caused by policies, practices and procedures that appear neutral but have the effect of disadvantaging racialized groups.

It is impossible to look at the impact of police in schools, without also considering the impact of systemic racism and bias on racialized populations in both law enforcement and educational institutions. The Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) in its report on racial profiling⁴⁸ heard concerns from Indigenous, Black and racialized communities that echo those raised in this review. The OHRC found that racial profiling by way of negative assumptions, higher rates of discipline, presumption of instigation, continues to be a major problem in both policing and education and noted that:

“Racial profiling in schools can have serious long-term negative effects on students. School discipline policies that have a disproportionate impact on racialized students have been linked to poor academic performance, school disengagement and students’ eventual involvement in the criminal justice system.”

The Ottawa Police Chief has acknowledged systemic racism within the police.⁴⁹ A 2019 report examining traffic stops conducted by Ottawa police, reported Middle Eastern drivers were stopped 3.18 times more than what you would expect based on their segment of the driving population while Black drivers were stopped 2.3 times more than what you would expect based on their population.⁵⁰ It only noted a very modest decrease in disproportionality from 5 years before. The same report noted that *“in many racialized communities in Ottawa, initial consultations ... found that these communities felt subject to excessive surveillance by the police ...”*⁵¹ The authors noted the adverse impact of traffic stops on Black and Middle Eastern communities and identified the need for alternative practices to promote community safety because of the adverse impact on Black and Middle Eastern communities in Ottawa.

A statement⁵² released by the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police noted a dearth of research on the efficacy of SRO programs. It goes on to acknowledge that a major limitation through a critical race perspective is that rarely do these studies take race/ethnicity seriously as a variable of interest. The literature on SROs tends to take a “colour blind” approach to examining SRO

⁴⁷ *Anti-Racism Act*, 2017, R.S.O. 2017, c. 15

⁴⁸ Ontario Human Rights Commission, *Report: Under Suspicion: Research and Consultation Report on Racial Profiling in Ontario*, Toronto: Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2017 accessed June 3, 2021 http://www3.ohrc.on.ca/sites/default/files/Under%20suspicion_research%20and%20consultation%20report%20on%20racial%20profiling%20in%20Ontario_2017.pdf

⁴⁹ Sloly, P. *Sloly: Ottawa police are committed to resolving bias and systemic racism*, Ottawa Citizen Sept. 4, 2020 accessed on 02/25/2021 <https://ottawacitizen.com/opinion/sloly-ottawa-police-are-committed-to-resolving-bias-and-systemic-racism>

⁵⁰ Foster, L. and Jacobs L., “Traffic Stop Race Data Collection Project II Progressing Towards Bias-Free Policing: Five Years of Race Data on Traffic Stops in Ottawa”, November 2019 at p. 4 <https://www.ottawapolice.ca/en/news-and-community/resources/EDI/OPS-TSRDCP-II-REPORT-Nov2019.pdf> accessed on 02/25/2021

⁵¹ *Ibid* at p. 3

⁵² “Statement: School Resource Officer Programs,” OACP, July 20, 2020, <https://www.oacp.ca/en/news/statement-school-resource-officer-programs.aspx>.

programming that does not acknowledge or recognize the impact of systemic and other forms of racism on the experiences, perspectives, and educational outcomes of Black and other racialized students. This is, for example, a major criticism of a study done in Peel Region a few years ago.

It noted that the current state of the literature makes it difficult to justify SRO programming in schools and called for police leaders to support evidence-based SRO research, particularly with respect to evaluation that places the experiences of BIPOC students front-and-centre.

Systemic racism is also recognized within the educational system, including at the OCDSB.⁵³ Recent OCDSB reports on suspensions and expulsions are indicative of discrimination against Indigenous, Black, Middle Eastern, 2SLGBTQ+ and students with disabilities in the discipline process, showing that they were at a higher risk of being suspended when compared to their proportion of the student population, than other students.⁵⁴

Participants shared, very strongly, the need for police reform as well as educational reform. Indigenous participants called for the decolonization of the entire system to rebuild a system where Indigenous histories, traditions, cultures and ways of knowing are centred and valued. While some expressed a desire to have a better relationship with the police in the future, they put that responsibility on the police to make that happen in partnership with their communities rather than in their schools. Participants articulated that it was not truthful to be teaching Indigenous, Black and racialized students to trust one officer when statistics and history show that they have a higher likelihood of being targeted by police as an institution.

“Layering the racist policing institution on top of the racist educational institution makes no sense.” Parent

“While there were some excellent SROs, we have to look at the whole institution of policing. The SROs started in the early 2000 as part of the Safe Schools Act. It was essentially a militarized response to safety in the schools. I dealt with a lot of traumatized students who had to deal with the police. It is incumbent on the Board to change the relationship because it is based on a dated model. It is racist and classist. Yes there were some excellent SROs, but the things other SROs told the students on sexuality and race was crap. On the whole, as an institution, the OCDSB needs to re-think their involvement with police. The program does not serve the interest of minoritized students.” Former Employee

“As a student, I do not want to play a game of “Russian roulette” as to whether the police officer assigned to my school is either “a good cop or a bad cop”. I am perplexed by the District’s plan to move forward to reduce disproportionate representation by employing a greater number of Indigenized and Black professionals and teachers, yet in parallel, continue to partner with a police force, proven to be systematically racist.” Indigenous Student

⁵³ See, for example Indigenous, Equity and Human Rights Roadmap accessed on May 24, 2021 https://ocdsb.ca/news/indigenous_equity_and_human_rights_roadmap

⁵⁴ Indigenous students were 3.5 times more likely to be suspended; Black students were 1.8 times more likely to be suspended; Middle Eastern students were 2.0 times more likely to be suspended; Gender Diverse students were 1.9 times more likely to be suspended; students with disabilities were from 2.7 to 6.6 times more likely to be suspended, depending upon the type of disability. See OCDSB 2019-2020 Student Suspension Report accessed on May 24, 2021 <https://pub-ocdsb.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=8618>

“The SRO said that the reason why racialized people distrust police is because they come from countries where police are untrustworthy and so he was denying any problems with police in Canada.” Former Student with a Disability

“It’s a lie if we are telling students that they can trust the police - that is not a true thing to be teaching right now - maybe in the future but not right now.”
Administrator

Themes of anti-Indigenous and anti-Black racism⁵⁵ coursed throughout the conversations and were apparent in experiences shared by participants. Concerns about Islamophobia and how it impacts on discipline and incorrect perceptions of racialized children as gangs rather than simply groups of children hanging out were also raised.

My son is traumatized and feels unsafe in school. He’s been harassed. He had police point guns in his face. Labelled by police as a gang member but he’s never been in conflict with the law. His only crime was being Somali, Black and male.”
Somali Parent

“SROs work for a system that upholds white supremacy. SROs should not be in schools because white students are often overlooked while BIPOC students are often looked at.” Black Student

“Sometimes police will sit outside or inside the school or in hallways. They will stare you down for no reason and try to be intimidating. I have never been racially profiled by a police officer in school but I know people who have been and it’s Black students mostly. I have never really seen anything bad happen with police officers at the school but I know that there are things that could happen. It’s not necessary to have them standing in hallways or in the office when you want to call home. It makes you feel uncomfortable.” Indigenous Student

“I have concerns about the surveillance conducted by police at rallies by Indigenous peoples. I also want to address the intent of the SRO program, versus the impact of the program. Two full time SROs are placed at Ridgemont High School and Gloucester High School, both with an enrollment of high numbers of racialized students and large Indigenous populations. Who made this decision? Who precisely do the officers serve and protect?” Indigenous Employee

“Police would roam around at lunch and only around the students of colour, particularly the boys. BIPOC students feel they are being labelled as criminals, we live in a world where POC are targeted by law enforcement more than white folks. To bring in officers to schools keeps that mindset that the only reason they are following you is because of your skin colour, not because of your actions or anything you have done in school. It is because you are a Black boy.” Somali Former Student

⁵⁵ Anti-Black racism concerns in the education and justice sector are aligned with concerns expressed in: Chelby Marie Daigle, 2016). *Addressing Anti-Black Racism in Ottawa: Forum Summary Report* accessed on May 31, 2021
https://www.cawi-ivtf.org/sites/default/files/publications/anti-black_racism_forum_report_2017-02.pdf

“Even speaking Arabic is not seen well ... When BIPOC students are together it’s seen as a threat when they form a group; If Arabic kids are together in a group speaking Arabic, someone will come and tell them to stop being together. They’re viewed as a gang but when white kids are all together it’s seen as normal. It’s complex. It’s not just based on language being spoken but also based on what they say. “Ya Allah” is a normal Arabic word but white people are scared when they hear Allah. It makes many white people uncomfortable and afraid.” Arabic Parent

“When we are saying we are uncomfortable about having children enter schools that have people with guns ... My heart beats and drops and I get scared and have anxiety and think they are coming for me every single time I see the police because of the traumatic experiences I have had with police. I didn’t develop this because I became criminalized but because I knew it in my flesh and I have seen what police officers do to people who look like me and are darker than me - even when I was 15 or 16 I felt like this.” Arabic Parent and Former Student

“The perception is that the SROs are there because the students are immigrants and Black and new to the country and police and teachers are taking advantage of the children. This is what we feel as parents and as children. The administration and the police gang up on the children in those schools. Why are there more police there? The perception of the community is because they are immigrants and Black.” Somali Parent

“When you combine the SROs in the schools with administrators who are racist, it is a problem”. Racialized Community Member

“School is a place that strives to make students feel safe ... we cannot solve all cases of bullying but we can if the bully is the SRO; we can if it’s a person we are bringing into the building to promote safety but in reality it is promoting racial bias and promoting segregation which I have seen first hand.” Indigenous Student

“There are questions in these consultations around police training. Teachers receive training on equity and anti-racism and we know students are still experiencing racism at the hand of teachers. Training isn’t sufficient to address the problems with police. We are doing lots of training with our teachers at school and we still have racism.” Employee

“Police aren’t really super successful at doing the job in society without bias, so what makes us think that they would be effective in school? We should use other tools that have been proven to be more effective.” Student

Parents and students shared how they adapted the way they raise their children and their behaviour in order to avoid the disproportionate impact of biased punishment and consequences and the life changing impacts these can have on them and their community. The weight of knowing police involvement was a possible response for misbehaviour was ever-present.

“Racialized kids are more at risk and it’s important to educate minorities that they are going to be more targeted by a police officer.” Middle Eastern Student

"I tried my best to stay out of situations like these because I don't want to be another statistic or another stereotype. For my 4 years I tried my best to stay out of trouble because I knows it's not just getting a warning - it would be heavy consequences not just for him but for people in my community so I tried my best to stay out of trouble," Black Former Student

"We teach them to try to be perfect but we know it's not going to work because everything they are going to do is going to feel like a threat to other children, to teachers. It's not only about calling the police but also about how the children are seen as a threat to teachers and other children. We don't give them the chance to make any mistakes. And we don't ask the same thing from white kids but when it comes to BIPOC we do and they are already seen as problematic." Arabic Parent

Concerns were also expressed about bias in discipline, both conscious and unconscious, and the way it affects the discretion of educators when they decide to escalate something and administrators when they decide to involve the police. Employees shared examples of disproportionate discipline that they witnessed and identified how challenging it is to remove unconscious bias - even with all the training that has happened, they are still witnessing it in the schools where they work. Students expressed fear about the police being used as a threat against them. Racialized students expressed experiences of being wrongfully accused and witnessing people being wrongfully accused, because of their race, by both educators and police.

"The staff use the police in different ways for different communities. I think a big part of the discussion that should be raised is that the greater school culture is at play with staff as they choose which ways to go about solving issues through police involvement. My racialized friends do not feel safe at schools." Student

"From a primary perspective I've seen the SRO used to play the role of disciplinarian for a child who did something wrong. There were two 6 year old children and both used classroom tools to try to hurt other students. One was white and one was Black. The only child who the principal chose to have the officer speak to was the young Somali boy. The principal had no right to subject a 6 year old child to a police officer. The only child who saw the officer was the Black child even though they both did the same thing." Black Employee

"The school called when my child was 4 years old because they wouldn't put on their snow pants. They wouldn't have done it for a white kid. It starts with small details and it gets worse and worse." Arabic Parent

"I have concern about the lack of work that we are doing to help administrators understand their own biases. We are doing nothing to address this. When you have these images and beliefs and bring in someone else who can enforce these beliefs there are a whole lot of other factors that come into play. The information that principals share with a police officer is consistent with their own biases." Black Employee

"The whole program doesn't operate in a vacuum. The use of officers in our schools reflects the unconscious bias of administrators in our school. If we find out it is primarily BIPOC students having police intervention, even with training of

administration about inequities and trauma informed and compassion informed education, they are a reflection of their unconscious bias. We can't say if we make some tweaks to the program it's going to be ok. Without police reform we're peddling the same old program" Administrator

"There are disproportionate responses towards racialized and white students for similar actions. We see unconscious bias play out all the time." Racialized Employee

"Teachers could use the police against students if they are always in the school. Police presence should be removed." Black Student

"The Black and Middle Eastern story - the boys have their story. They talk about how teachers since they were little kicked them out in the halls and how they got in trouble with the principals." Employee

"We already know we have higher suspension and expulsion rates and adding police presence to that dynamic only makes things more difficult for our kids who are likely to come into contact with police in their communities and neighborhoods again...further traumatizing them." Somali Parent

"Someone at the school can call the police for anything - especially when we already know that the police will target BIPOC - How can we feel as parents knowing that it is a choice for the school to call or not the police? We know we live in a society where racism exists and we know being a teacher or an educator doesn't protect against racism. Who's going to choose whether it's time to call the police on a kid or not? It's going to be based on stereotypes, racial bias, perceptions and research already shows us that there is profiling racial in school and BIPOC kids are going to be the ones who are targeted. Asking the question is kind of like having the obvious answers - schools are not the space for police." Arabic Parent

Suggestions for the way forward. It is evident from the experiences shared, that the OCDSB must take further action to address anti-Indigenous and anti-Black racism in as well as discrimination against 2SLGBTQ+ and students with disabilities within the OCDSB. This starts with a more intensive professional development program for educators and administrators focusing on identifying and addressing implicit biases, understanding trauma, and in-depth anti-racism training, including looking at how anti-racist practices should be incorporated into the discipline process. This training should be reinforced by checks and balances as well as transparent accountability mechanisms to hold employees accountable for meeting OCDSB's competency expectations.

Some best practices to address implicit biases in the suspension process and when making decisions about whether to involve the police were identified in the Review of the Peel District School Board⁵⁶ (PDSB). The OCDSB should consider adopting something similar into its practice across the District. The best practice includes:

1. Initially remove yourself from the situation to de-escalate yourself;

⁵⁶ Chadha, E., Herbert S., and Richard S. Review of the Peel District School Board. 2020. Accessed May 26, 2021.

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/new/review-peel-district-school-board-report-en.pdf>

2. Unpack the incident by asking (i) What is the type of incident? (ii) What are the assumptions being made about the student and the student's behaviour? (iii) After walking through the version of events from the teacher's perspective and the student's perspective, what makes sense?

The OHRC has recommended anti-bias training; developing policies, procedures and guidelines; and creating effective accountability monitoring and accountability mechanisms that include complaint procedures, disciplinary measures and collecting, analyzing and reporting on data as a way to broadly address racial profiling and systemic discrimination.⁵⁷

OCDSB culture not to question role of the police

It became evident over the course of the review, that it is ingrained in the OCDSB culture not to question the actions or involvement of the police. Fundamental assumptions underlying the involvement of police in schools have not been open to question and there has been no critical interrogation of the impacts of police involvement on students, and in particular on Indigenous, Black and marginalized students. On rare occasions when particular actions or approaches of the police were questioned, employees recalled feeling like they had been reprimanded for making the police uncomfortable or putting the partnership in jeopardy. In the course of consultations, several employees and former employees indicated concern that it was career limiting to question the status quo and raise concerns about the impacts of how we are working with police on Indigenous, Black and marginalized students.

"We're going to worry about the police feeling uncomfortable when we've got a whole school of kids feeling uncomfortable." Employee

"I also wanted to add some additional thoughts about today's session that I did not feel comfortable raising during the consultation itself. I was very concerned that everyone in today's meeting is a white administrator in our secondary schools and, as a result, our own bias and "appreciation" for police work in schools may not be reflective of the reality of the students we serve in our schools. As much as I appreciate my colleagues and the work we do, I'm not sure how many folks are engaged in questioning their blind trust in the police and how they carry out matters in our schools. I admit that I am new to these realizations myself; for many years, I implicitly trusted the SRO's who entered the schools I worked in and did not really question the impact of their role or their presence on students. These experiences ... combined with my own work in equity and inclusion, have brought me to this point where I am actively questioning the need for the police in our schools. While I'm not saying we should not have the police at all, I do wonder how we can possibly have them in schools without causing further harm to our vulnerable students. There is so much to be repaired and I'm hoping that some of my Principal colleagues are reaching out to you with the same questions and concerns as me!" Administrator

Relationship between administrators and SROs

⁵⁷ See OHRC webpage

<http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/under-suspicion-research-and-consultation-report-racial-profiling-ontario>
accessed June 3, 2021

The feedback from some administrators, employees and participants throughout the review, established some substantial concerns that the relationship between the administrators and SROs is negatively impacting on the experiences of children in school, and in particular on the experiences of Indigenous, Black and marginalized students.

“We value the way that police support our work and this stops us from reflecting on how it impacts on students.... I have worked with really amazing SROs but looking back now after what I’ve learned in the last year, I now realize that some interactions were harmful or potentially harmful to students but I didn’t perceive them as harmful at the time.” Administrator

It became evident that while this review did not reveal substantive evidence of positive relationship building between SROs and many students beyond friendly banter and conversations with some students, it did reveal evidence of a strong relationship built between administrators and the SROs. Many administrators expressed heavy, and perhaps undue, reliance upon the SRO to navigate issues at their schools. While at first glance, a positive relationship between an administrator and an SRO may seem like a beneficial result, the impact of that relationship on the experiences of students, and in particular on the experiences of Indigenous, Black and marginalized students is something that must be examined.

“I’m very concerned that the voices of administrators will have power when we haven’t spent time as administrators thinking about trauma and impact, simply because we value them in helping us to do our work. This can’t be the only guiding principle on why we need to have police officers in our schools.” Administrator

“I like for students to understand that there are more people out there (other than their teachers) who want to help and support them. That being said, the relationships between police and our most marginalized students are not grounded in support, even though we might assume/think they are. So, while the SRO’s presence has benefitted me (as an Admin), I’m not sure it totally benefits my students.” Administrator

In the survey, administrators indicated that they highly valued the advice and guidance that they received from SROs, many identifying this as the aspect of the relationship that they valued most. Concerns were raised by students, community members and other employees that this close relationship can inadvertently contribute to the criminalization of children in OCDSB schools. When administrators use their discretion to consult police on an issue regarding a specific child, or to involve police in assessing potential threats, or involve police in educating children and their family as part of the progressive discipline process they are involving law enforcement in the life of a child and increasing the risk that the child will become “known to the police”. This is one of the grave fears expressed by parents of racialized children during the consultation process. It is common practice for administrators to involve police in progressive discipline responses for non-criminal matters such as fighting, bullying and harassment for incidents beginning as early as primary school. This practice and the subsequent familiarity that police develop with a child as a result of the administrator inviting them into the process is of significant concern.

“The danger is the staff, to be honest with you. You can have an SRO in the school who is completely inclusive, but the SRO will react based on the administrator’s reaction towards a student. For me, that is the danger. The

relationship between the SRO and the administration. The administrator is the one who decides to involve and report to the SRO. The SRO only gets their information from the staff... It's human instinct to feel like the SRO needs to support or model the reaction of the "Friend" of the administration - so this can drive unfair responses." Employee

Other impacts of the close relationship include, the expansion of police involvement into areas of education and discipline where they were not previously involved with impacts for students involved in the discipline process. For example, involving the SRO in giving advice about, responding to, or engaging in the progressive discipline response for a discretionary incident may increase the likelihood of punitive and carceral responses to incidents rather than educative, corrective and restorative responses. The close relationships between administrators and the SROs can lead to the SRO being embraced as "*part of the team*" leading to SRO's being treated as a "*second VP*" or being "*seen as staff*". This raised concerns about SROs being delegated responsibilities or becoming involved in matters that cross boundaries into responsibilities that should be taken on by educators rather than law enforcement. It also may impact on the sharing of personal information between the administrator and the SRO about students and families that may go beyond what is strictly required by law.

Experiences were shared that corroborated these concerns. For example, the law requires police officers to have a warrant to search a locker; the OCDSB policies allow a principal to search a locker if they have "reasonable and probable grounds". A student was accused of shoplifting and the administrator, who had a relationship with the police, used their discretion to search the child's locker while police officers, who did not have a warrant, watched. This was not in relation to an incident that impacted on the school climate and is a clear example of when lines become blurred between an administrator's duty to the student in *loco parentis* and their relationship with the police.

It is apparent from elementary administrators that the largest proportion view their relationship with SROs as being collaborative or consultative on topics related to school safety. However, amongst the panel of secondary administrators, this shifted away from being a consultative relationship to the largest proportion of administrators identifying the SRO as part of the school team. This is indicative of the close relationship built between the administration and the police.

When asked what they valued most about the service provided by the SROs many administrators named the advice that the SROs provide to them and the ability to call with questions. Benefits to students and families were also generally referenced, with value being placed on their interactions and engagement with individual students and families in response to a situation.

Suggestions for the way forward. The concerns raised above, combined with the more detailed concerns outlined below, suggest that the OCDSB should re-examine the close relationship between the OCDSB, administrators and the police and put in place safeguards, that include the accountability mechanisms below but that might also include other checks and balances, that preserve the necessary boundaries between administration and the police and that re-centre the administrator's role in *loco parentis* to the child.

Information sharing between OCDSB, administrators and police

Violence/threat risk assessment

A significant amount of information about both students and their families is also reportedly shared as part of the Violence/Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA) Process. The Ottawa Protocol currently provides for police involvement as part of a multidisciplinary team to respond when “a student engages in behaviours or threatens to engage in behaviours that may result in serious injury to a person(s)”⁵⁸. The current VTRA practice requires SRO involvement for all worrisome or threat making behaviour, regardless of the risk level. The Ottawa Protocol mandates the SRO to be involved in the data collection process as well as part of the multidisciplinary team that assesses the level of threat and decides on next steps. This institutionalizes police involvement in incidents that do not require mandatory police notification under the Provincial Protocol⁵⁹ and can have the impact of expanding police involvement into the lives of children who attend school.

The Ottawa Protocol emphasizes that informed consent should be obtained prior to sharing information, when wherever “possible and reasonable”⁶⁰ but goes on to outline the exceptions in the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protections of Privacy Act* (MFIPPA), *Personal Health Information Protection Act* (PHIPA) and the *Youth Criminal Justice Act* (YCJA). The Ottawa Protocol specifically mentions an MFIPPA exception that permits the sharing of information if there are compelling health and safety reasons⁶¹. Absent from the Ottawa Protocol is mention of the fact that this particular exception *requires* the OCDSB to inform the individual that they have shared information about them, in writing, after the information is disclosed. The only other way MFIPPA permits the sharing of private information with law enforcement is if it relates to determining whether a police investigation is required or to aid a police investigation, which is not part of the VTRA process.⁶²

The PHIPA exception referenced in the Ottawa Protocol *permits* the disclosure of some personal health information without consent, but it does not *require* it.⁶³ The *Youth Criminal Justice Act*⁶⁴ applies to young people between the ages of 12 and 17. The YCJA gives the police the discretion to share information about a youth with the OCDSB if it is necessary to ensure compliance with a youth justice court order, to ensure the safety of staff, students or other persons, or to facilitate the rehabilitation of the young person.⁶⁵

“Admins want to keep their SROs because it makes their life easier. What they do and the relationship between the school and the SRO is that they are sharing information they have no legal right to share. Patrol officers would never do this.”
Employee

A number of examples were shared about the VTRA process that highlight the concerns raised by the participants. One situation involved an Indigenous student who was prevented from

⁵⁸ See Ottawa Protocol, (2020) at p. 43.

⁵⁹ For example the Provincial Protocol does not require police notification in relation to all threats. It only requires police notification in relation to threats with a weapon and bomb threats.

⁶⁰ Ottawa Protocol, 2020 at p. 51.

⁶¹ Ottawa Protocol, 2020 at p. 51 referencing s. 32(h) *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, R.S.O. 1990 c. M.56.

⁶² See *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, R.S.O. 1990 c. M.56. at and s. 32(g)

⁶³ See *Personal Health Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, R.S.O. 2004, c. 3, Sched. A at ss. 38 to 43.

⁶⁴ *Youth Criminal Justice Act*, R.S.C. 2002, c.1 (YCJA)

⁶⁵ See *Youth Criminal Justice Act*, R.S.C. 2002, c.1 (YCJA) at s. 125(6).

returning to school because a community partner refused to share additional health information that is not required to be shared. In other situations background information was shared not just about the student by the participants in the VTRA team, but about students' families and histories of interactions with the police to inform decision making. In all of these situations the SRO is involved in the process, learning private information shared about the student's discipline history, medical history and other information, including Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and possibly safety plans.

This raises concerns from a privacy perspective, as well as concerns in terms of an institutional process that creates increased exposure to police and increased knowledge about a student by a police officer. This has the potential to contribute to pushing marginalized students out of school and increase the risk of criminalization.

Suggestions for the way forward. Police involvement in the VTRA process, and the scope of information shared in the process, particularly with the police about a student, should be examined carefully. Serious consideration should be given to limiting police involvement, if any, to cases that require mandatory notification of police under the Provincial Protocol and to assessing the risk only. Information sharing should be limited to that which is absolutely required in order to ensure safety. Care should be taken to follow the requirements of MFIPPA for consent and to inform the student in writing about private information shared and with whom the information was shared. The OCDSB should ensure that all participants in the VTRA process have training on the parameters of information sharing. If the participants are unable to access training, they should have a detailed briefing on information sharing parameters prior to joining a VTRA meeting.

"VTRA meetings are ridiculous. People sitting around the table with a police officer talking about whether or not the child is at risk. Police talking about a student ... I don't want the police there. If the report isn't in the OSR then the school doesn't need to know. The idea that you need to know about the child's personal family matters in order to educate them is a concern - you need to know about the child and the child's learning needs and that's it." Employee

"The extent of information shared in the VTRA, for example the number of contacts with police over the past months, is absolutely shocking! They shouldn't share this information. They often come in to chat with the Vice Principal or Principal and they often find out information about students and it's shocking to me what they will share. There are blurred lines because of the relationship between the administrator and the SRO and this leads to too much information sharing." Employee

"We use SROs in schools a lot out of fear because we don't know what to do and we don't have enough information about what else is possible. They are seen as part of the school team, but they're not really, and you see a lot of information going back and forth about the family and the kid, when it shouldn't. Because they are seen as part of the school team, they are called more quickly because a dysregulated kid needs the support. They are our go-to rather than building the skills and confidence in the building to respond. Relationships and connections create safety in schools - if we can get back to that, that's in the best interests of the kids." Employee

Sharing student index cards

Other information sharing that was mentioned by Administrators, involved the sharing of student index cards with the police to facilitate location of a missing child (who had left the premises without authorization) or to help understand a child to adjust the police response. The Index card is an easy way to share information, but it contains far more information than what is required to be shared.

Suggestion for the way forward. The OCDSB should emphasize the obligation to share the least amount of information required with the police, in order to protect the privacy of the children it serves.

Identification of photographs

Concerns have been raised that, at times, the information shared, not just in the VTRA process, appears to cross the threshold of what is permissible and highlights blurred lines of responsibility created by the close administrator/SRO relationship. The sharing of photographs by the SRO with school staff for identification purposes was raised as one area of concern. This process is more prevalent in secondary schools than elementary schools with 70% of secondary administrators reporting this happening a few times a year or more and only 14% of elementary administrators reporting the same.

This typically involves the image of a youth who is suspected to have been involved in an incident that may or may not have a link to the school climate. Of the administrators who reported this taking place, only 20% were able to say that the requests were always related to incidents that had a direct impact on the school climate or school safety; a notable 80% either said it only sometimes had a link or that the link wasn't clear.

In a particularly concerning incident, the school identified a student for something that was not a crime and did not involve something that occurred on or was related to the school climate. It resulted in a homeless, racialized student being targeted for having provided a false name to the police after they were found to be loitering inside a public shopping area to get warm. This is an example of how students can become known to police as a result of the SRO program in schools and the close relationship between SROs and school staff. This is concerning because it can contribute to the process of pushing children out of school and be a factor in criminalization.

“Everytime you go to the court and someone is charged or accused of something you read in the paper “He was known to the police”. Parents believe that schools are providing this information to the police and this label ends up labelling them as gang affiliated and known to police and stigmatizes them as trouble kids.”
Somali Community Member

“We’ve seen officers who have relationships with kids in schools come into the community and then have kids punished in schools - they share information with teachers and schools and this creates harm.” Somali Former Student and Parent

Section 11(2) of the Ottawa Protocol *requires* the principal to disclose a student's full name, date of birth, address and telephone number if there is a criminal investigation or an investigation that will lead to a court proceeding or tribunal being conducted. While this disclosure is permitted by

the exception⁶⁶ in the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (MFIPPA), it is not *required*. Therefore the Ottawa Protocol introduces a requirement to share information with the police that is not required under the law. This is concerning because it can contribute to students feeling concerned about attending school and it has the potential to contribute to them being pushed out of school which has a high link to criminalization.

In discussions, most administrators said that they acquiesced to identifying pictures of students shared by police, because they had always been told that is the administrator's role to cooperate with the police. However, the administrator's duty, first and foremost, is to protect the best interests of the child who is entrusted to them because of the standard of care required by the doctrine of *loco parentis*. Additionally, OCDSB's first priority is to create a welcoming and safe environment for all students, including marginalized students. Administrators come to know the identity of a child and have access to their personal information because they attend school. If students need to worry about an administrator sharing this information with the police as a matter of right, it may contribute to lower attendance, a decreased sense of belonging and help push students out of the school system. The fear about being identified to police has driven racialized students to go so far as to avoid having their photograph in the school year book. Cross-racial identification is notoriously unreliable because of own-race bias and this helps to drive the fear of having school authorities incorrectly identify a student to the police.⁶⁷ Participants shared their own experiences with the police mistakenly identifying them because of similar names or an incorrect eyewitness identification

When asked about how often they are asked by an SRO to identify a child, 67% of secondary administrators indicated this happens a few times a year. The rest indicated that they weren't sure or never. One respondent said it happened on a monthly basis. When asked about the nexus between the request for identification and their school climate, 87.5% of secondary administrators noted that the nexus to their school climate was not always clear, that it was only sometimes evident or that it was never connected. This result reinforces the concern raised by parents and students that information is being shared between administrators and the police, that isn't clearly related to incidents that involve the school.

Suggestions for the way forward. To address the concerns raised above and to reinforce the goal of OCDSB schools as a welcoming place for all students, the OCDSB should consider providing practice direction to administrators to limit identification of students in photos provided by the police to situations where not identifying the person may result in serious or imminent harm to another person. The OCDSB should also consider providing professional development to administrators about the difference between what information sharing is *permitted* under law and what information sharing is *required* and guidance on how to use their discretion to decide when and what to disclose.

Informed consent and parent/guardian consent

Concerns were raised by some participants about whether sufficient student consent and/or parental/guardian consent is obtained prior to police engaging with students involved in incidents, either as suspects, witnesses or victims. 41% of survey respondents thought it should be mandatory to get parental consent before a student is permitted to speak to the police. An additional 26% thought it should be obtained if possible.

⁶⁶ See *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, R.S.O. 1990 c. M.56. at s. 32(g)

⁶⁷ Bryan S. Ryan, *Alleviating Own-Race Bias in Cross-Racial Identifications*, 8 Wash. U. Jur. Rev. 115 (2015). Available at: https://openscholarship.wustl.edu/law_jurisprudence/vol8/iss1/5

The principal has no right to call the police without informing the parents first. If the parents can't intervene, maybe, but parental notice is required first. The parents must know first before the call is made." Arabic Parent

Parents and community members in the consultation also emphasized the need for not just parental consent, but also for parental presence if a child is going to speak with a police officer in relation to an incident.

The Ottawa Protocol addresses the duty to notify parents or guardians if police will be interviewing a student.⁶⁸ It places the obligation on the principal to make best efforts to contact the parents of children under 18 prior to the interview and requires a parent or guardian, third party adult, or the principal to be present if the parents cannot be present. It notes that if the principal is in attendance during the interview that they must be aware of any potential conflict arising from their own duty to investigate and their role as an advocate for the student.

The only exceptions to the principal's duty to notify the parents arise when:

- The student is 18 years of age or older;
- In exigent circumstances or if the parent may be implicated; or
- The child is 16 or 17 years of age and has withdrawn from parental consent

The YCJA sets out specific and detailed requirements about the duty of police officers to inform young people about their right to contact a lawyer and/or contact their parents before making a statement to the police. These safeguards are clearly reflected in the Ottawa Protocol as well as in Appendix D to the Ottawa Protocol which sets out the format for a student to be informed of and choose whether or not to waive these rights.

Concerns were raised that the protections built into the Ottawa Protocol are not sufficient to counter the power imbalance between a student suspected of being involved in a crime and the authority figure of a principal and a police officer seeking to interview them about that alleged crime.

One parent noted their child's experience being interviewed by the police at school and used this experience to reinforce the need for all children, even those under 18 or who have withdrawn from parental control to have a parent or trusted adult present before they are interviewed by a police officer:

"The SRO seems to put students in a position where they feel automatically guilty and this is where it's a problem without having the parent there. This is why parental consent and presence is so important. I'm coming from a place of experience with my own son. Students don't know when they sign the paperwork [withdrawal from parental control] that there are implications if they get involved with the SRO.

My son was literally interrogated by an SRO - back and forth between him and his friends. When my son described it, it sounded like a real interrogation. If I was present as a parent I would have had some input. How many times have they done this to a young student? Specifically, when it comes to the interview when a student signs a document saying they are no longer under parental control, they

⁶⁸ Ottawa Protocol, 2020 at p. 21

should still be informed of what their options are - then and there - if there is an incident in the future, they should still be informed that we could involve your parents if you want.” Black parent

The YCJA and the Ottawa Protocol set the minimum standards. If a parent or trusted adult does not attend to represent the student, the principal can oftentimes find themselves in a conflict of interest because of their opposing obligations to both investigate the incident and advocate for the best interests of the student being investigated. The law clearly recognizes that the principal and teachers stand in *loco parentis* to a student. The Supreme Court of Canada has interpreted this to mean that the principal must provide supervision and protection to the student that is that of a careful or prudent parent.⁶⁹

It is questionable that an administrator can sufficiently fulfil this fiduciary obligation when a child is in conflict with the law or involved in a serious incident that requires a principal's investigation under the *Education Act* because of their conflict of interest.

Suggestions for the way forward. A child rights approach should always guide any decisions to permit children to interact with the police. This means being guided by the best interests of the child and ensuring that the child provides informed consent. The informed consent of the child must always be obtained before an administrator permits a child to speak to a police officer about an incident. This consent should initially be obtained by the administrator and then again by the police officer after the child provides informed consent to the administrator. This should apply whether the child is a victim, suspect or witness.

In order to help level out the power imbalance and ensure that child has the benefit of a parent's advocacy and support, it is strongly recommended that parental *consent*, not just notification, be a mandatory requirement at the OCDSB *before* a child can meet with the police, except for in exigent circumstances such as imminent risk of serious harm or if the parent is suspected to be involved. It is also strongly suggested that parental presence be required. If parental presence is not possible, it is suggested that the interview be delayed until such a time that the parent can be present.

As alternatives, if parents are unwilling or unable to be present, the OCDSB could consider developing a partnership with a community-based, culturally relevant youth advocacy or legal aid organization who can attend at the school during an interview and represent the best interests of the child. Examples of organizations doing student advocacy work that were mentioned by participants during this consultation include Inuuqatigiit Centre for Inuit Children, Youth and Families,⁷⁰ The Rajo Project (Somali for “Hope”) operated by the Centre for Resilience and Social Development⁷¹; and the Somali Centre for Family Services⁷². Considerations should be given to having third-party advocates who are culturally appropriate to support the child and their family through every stage of the process.

It is important to note that the Ottawa Protocol only speaks to the duty to *notify* parents or guardians; it does not create a requirement to obtain parental or guardian consent to the interview. It also does not speak to delaying an interview until a parent can be present. Subject to exceptions for exigent circumstances where there is a significant threat to imminent safety,

⁶⁹ *Myers v. Peel County Board of Education*, 1981 CanLII 27 (SCC), [1981] 2 SCR 21

⁷⁰ See <https://inuqatigiit.ca/> for more information.

⁷¹ See <http://thecrsd.org/rajo/> for more information.

⁷² See <https://scfsottawa.org/> for more information.

these are protections that should be built into the Ottawa Protocol to protect the best interests of the child.

For situations where the child has withdrawn from parental consent, the principal should still inform them of the option of notifying their parents or another trusted adult or the right to refuse to be interviewed by the police, prior to permitting the child to speak with the police officers. The Ottawa Protocol should be adjusted to reflect this additional protection.

Weaponization of police by other parents

An observation arose from examining the feedback administrators provided about the most recent times that police were involved in responding to incidents at their school. Several incidents reported indicated police becoming involved at the request of a parent, when they were presumably not satisfied that the school could or would sufficiently address the issue. This happened in situations involving children who were involved in fights, bullying and harassment and for some incidents, involving children under the age of 12, which is the age of criminal responsibility. Some incidents involved concerns about racialized children. This is concerning for several reasons. First, it removes discretion from the principal, who, taking a considered view of all factors, is in the best position to make the decision about whether or not the incident necessitates police involvement. Second, it takes what is often school-based misbehaviour that should be dealt with through progressive discipline at school, and opens the behaviour up to criminalization. Third, it creates an opportunity for parents to weaponize the police against another child. Parents have the choice to make a police report about another child, but providing increased access to this recourse through the school has the potential to increase police involvement in matters where it is not required. Allowing parents to dictate the involvement of police on matters that involve school discipline creates a dynamic that is open to misuse and subject to personal bias, power and privilege and interferes with the administrator's discretion.

Suggestions for the way forward. The OCDSB should consider revising its practice to make it clear that only the administrator can make a decision about whether or not police involvement is warranted in matters relating to school safety. The accountability mechanisms suggested later in this report should help ensure that this discretion is exercised judiciously. If a parent wants to involve the police in an incident that the principal does not feel warrants police involvement, the administrator should direct the parent to register a report at the nearest police station, rather than facilitating the parent to meet with a police officer at the school or who is attached to the school through the SRO program.

Data collection, accountability and transparency

It became apparent very early on in the review that the OCDSB has not engaged in a substantive evaluation of the impact of the program until now and does not collect data to evaluate and report on how it is involving police in schools. No reporting mechanism exists for administrators to record when they make calls for service to the police and there is no accountability mechanism within the District to allow for an examination of this particular issue.

Review impact of Ottawa Protocol

The Ottawa Protocol calls for a review of the protocol every two years, or more often if required. Schools boards are tasked with soliciting input from school councils, parents, staff and students in the review process. The review is to be completed by members of the Regional Safe Schools

Committee and must include members of the four Boards and the OPS. No information is provided on what it expected to be covered by the review.

The Ottawa Protocol was first signed in 2011 and then revised in 2016 and 2020 respectively. There is no indication of any review being done of the impact of the program over this time period on students. Rather, the review process for the Ottawa Protocol was limited to making revisions to align it with new developments in the legislative and policy framework in Ontario, such as the legalization of cannabis a few years back.

The OCDSB conducted informal surveys from its administrators annually to understand their experiences implementing the Ottawa Protocol and identify operational challenges. The OCDSB then engaged with the OPS to work out operational changes to practices to address the challenges. Information gathered from these assessments was used to modify practice rather than to revise the review. No assessment was done of the impact of the program on students and assessments were limited to operational concerns.

“Underlying it is that “we just need to help kids and families see that police aren’t bad.” That is what administrators think. We are helping the police rather than questioning the impact on students. Where is self reflection?” Administrator

“The fact there is little or no trust between the police and racialized communities, regardless of the positive intentions of the program, it is not working.” Black Employee

“Where is the data on any Indigenous youth engaging in a positive way with officers inside a school? Indigenous Community Member

Suggestions for the way forward. Moving forward, as the partnership between OCDSB and OPS is reimagined, it is incumbent to build a requirement into any revisions to the Ottawa Protocol to engage in a regular, identity-based evaluation of the impact of all forms of police involvement on students. This can only be done by collecting appropriate data, disaggregating the data by Indigeneity, race, sexual and gender identity and disability at a minimum, and engaging in human-rights based, participatory discussions and identity-based consultations with students, parents and guardians and community members to assess impact.

Accountability of administrators

Currently at OCDSB there is no mechanism to hold administrators accountable for how and when they are involving police in schools. Accountability, and transparency about how police are being used in schools is a foundational aspect of a human rights-based approach. The preamble to the *Anti-Racism Act* recognizes that systemic racism can be perpetuated by a failure to identify and monitor racial disparities and inequities and to take remedial action.

Engaging with police to respond to serious incidents in schools will remain a reality into the future. Participants in the review expressed concern that the support provided to administrators until now has not been sufficient to support them in recognizing and addressing their own implicit biases and giving them the information they need to reduce the potential negative impacts of police involvement on students. To reduce the impact that individual administrator discretion can have on police involvement it is important to develop clear training and written guidelines on OCDSB’s expectations around police involvement that are child rights and human

rights-centred and that help administrators identify and address implicit biases. This may include factors to consider prior to involving the police and alternatives to police involvement.

Suggestions for the way forward. It is also important for the OCDSB to develop checks and balances to help limit implicit bias in police involvement. This could include a requirement that the relevant superintendent of instruction be informed or required to provide approval *prior* to an administrator making a call for service to police, making exceptions for situations that pose a significant risk of imminent harm.

“What is missing is putting responsibility on principals for how they are using the police officers. There is no learning or responsibility placed on them.” Employee

“I have deep concerns about the ability of administrators to make discretionary decisions about having police in schools.” Black Employee

“The area of discretion is the area of the most concern. Who is making that decision and what is informing it? Is it monitored and who is holding them accountable for the decisions? There was something that happened after hours and the school got the SRO involved. Personal mental health information was shared with the SRO and the school defended it. It was defended in the multidisciplinary meeting too. When people don’t have an understanding of the harm that can be caused and there is no accountability it is really worrisome.” Employee

“If the outcome is that the SRO stays, then there needs to be accountability built into that decision. It’s terrifying that race-based data is not collected... Tracking will hold people accountable. Race-based data and documentation for the reasoning without disclosing confidential information as well as training...” Administrator

Accountability of OCDSB

Accountability of the OCDSB for the involvement of police in schools is also currently missing from OCDSB policy and practice. Data collected by administrators about police involvement should be aggregated and reported publicly by the District each year. The public reporting should be identity-based to allow for transparency and public accountability for any disparities and to provide early evidence to support changed practice to remove disparities.

Suggestions for the way forward. It is incumbent upon the OCDSB to establish a transparent accountability mechanism that requires administrators to track and record police involvement. This mechanism should allow for monitoring and analysis of the identity of children engaged with the police including information about their age, gender and sexuality, disability, race and/or Indigeneity. Information should also be collected about the reason for police involvement and the outcome of the involvement. Details about parent or guardian notification and presence should also be recorded. This information should be monitored and analyzed annually and Superintendents should be given responsibility to hold administrators accountable for addressing disparities.

This accountability mechanism should allow for the internal and public reporting of all police involvement in schools disaggregated by identity in order to identify and address any disproportionate impact on Indigenous, Black and marginalized students. This is aligned with

standards and obligations to identify and remove barriers under the *Anti-Racism Act*, the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* and the *Ontario Human Rights Code*. Annual, public reporting, disaggregated by identity is an important element of transparent accountability. Changes that the OCDSB might consider include:

- a. Mandatory data collection by principals that includes a description of the reason for police involvement, the student's age, Indigeneity, race, gender, disability, whether parental consent was obtained;
- b. Mandatory, identity-based annual public reporting; and,
- c. Annual school-based meetings between administrators and SOI to discuss disproportionality in application and make plans to reduce disproportionality.

Additionally, the OCDSB should consider implementing a regular review cycle that evaluates the impact of how OCDSB is involving police with students, with a particular focus on its impacts on Indigenous, Black and marginalized students. This evaluation should seek out and include student and parent feedback.

To ensure consistency of practice and help to reduce unconscious bias, the OCDSB could consider developing written practice guidelines for OCDSB administrators on police involvement that are child-centred, rights-based and focused on limiting police involvement. The written guidelines should clearly outline OCDSB expectations around issues such as parental and guardian consent, sharing of information about students with the police, search and seizure, considerations that should be taken into account prior to making a call for service to police and expectations around accountability. The guidelines could also identify non-police alternatives to police involvement and other service provider options.

To provide administrators and educators with the skills they need the OCDSB should consider embedding child-centred, human rights-based, anti-oppression and trauma-informed approaches to all safe schools training moving forward. The OCDSB should also consider making space to discuss the results of this review with administrators in order to create a better understanding of the implications of OCDSB's current practices in progressive discipline and police involvement on Indigenous, Black and marginalized communities. The OCDSB should consider taking on a proactive role to help administrators better understand the new practice direction and changes to the policies and procedures and become more trauma-aware and bias-aware in their practices.

Finally, it is important for accountability that the OCDSB take steps to also ensure that students and their families are aware of their rights. The OCDSB should consider providing annual rights-based training for students and their families that includes information on children's rights and in particular on children's rights if they are in conflict with the law. The training should include information on where to raise a concern if they are uncomfortable to approach administration and how to contact a community advocate to accompany them through the process.

Inconsistencies between Provincial Protocol requirements and OCDSB policies, procedures and practices

Narrow definition of incidents requiring mandatory police notification

Incidents that require mandatory police notification are identified in the Provincial Protocol. All other involvement of police in schools is *legally discretionary*. The Ottawa Protocol and the OCDSB police involvement policies and procedures have created a more expansive list of incidents requiring mandatory police notification than the list in the Provincial Protocol.

For example the Ottawa Protocol includes all threats of serious physical bodily harm not just threats with a weapon as an incident that requires mandatory police notification. The Ottawa Protocol also names the possession of child pornography. Various OCDSB policies and procedures also expand the definition of what requires mandatory police notification to include giving alcohol or cannabis to a minor (identified as mandatory in [PR.533.SCO](#) [PR.528.SCO](#)); bullying (identified as mandatory in [PR.533.SCO](#)); bullying; if, i. the pupil has previously been suspended for engaging in bullying; and ii. the pupil's continuing presence in the school creates an unacceptable risk to the safety of another person (identified as mandatory in [PR.528.SCO](#)); and vandalism causing extensive damage to school or property located on school premises (identified as mandatory in [PR.533.SCO](#) [PR.528.SCO](#)).

The inclusion of these items on the mandatory list takes away the administrator's discretion to determine when police involvement is necessary and contributes to increasing levels of policing to respond to incidents that don't necessarily warrant a police response. For example, the consensual sharing of intimate images between young people might technically meet the definition of child pornography, but it is not the type of incident that requires a police response.

This widening of the definition of mandatory incidents requiring police notification has the impact of institutionalizing police response and involvement in incidents where a school-based disciplinary response might be more appropriate. It also potentially exacerbates the negative impacts experienced by some Indigenous, Black and marginalized students and community members.

Suggestions for the way forward. For consistency and to limit police involvement to the extent possible, it is recommended that both the Ottawa Protocol and the OCDSB policies and procedures be revised to reflect the Provincial Protocol definition of incidents that require mandatory police notification and remove the additional items on the list, unless they are serious crimes. Police notification response to non-mandatory incidents should be at the discretion of the administrator, with appropriate training and accountability mechanisms built in to ensure that the discretion is applied appropriately and in a way that does not disproportionately impact on Indigenous, Black and marginalized students. For clarity, it is also suggested that references to involving the police in responding to discretionary incidents like mischief, bullying, vandalism, giving alcohol or cannabis to a minor, being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs also be removed from the Ottawa Protocol.⁷³ Suggested preliminary revisions to the Ottawa Protocol are set out in **Appendix 15**.

Exceptions for children under 12 and children with special education needs

Important adjustments are also suggested to align OCDSB policies and procedures⁷⁴ and the Ottawa Protocol, with the Provincial Protocol. These adjustments will help to centre the best interests of the child and address disproportionality in police involvement for children with disabilities and children who are marginalized by limiting police involvement.

Under the Provincial Protocol, involvement of police in responding to incidents involving children under 12 is *always* legally discretionary, even if the incident is on the list requiring mandatory notification.⁷⁵ If an incident that requires mandatory notification of the police occurs, the

⁷³ Ottawa Protocol (2020) at p. 12 and 13.

⁷⁴ [PR.533.SCO Police Involvement in Schools](#) at Art. 2.2

⁷⁵ Provincial Protocol (2015) at p. 23.

Provincial Protocol clearly gives administrators discretion to determine whether or not to involve the police. This is important because children under the age of 12 are below the age of criminal responsibility. It is also important because it allows for the appropriate application of discretion which can help to reduce experiences of over-policing and criminalization reported by marginalized children in the school system and in their neighbourhoods.

The Ottawa Protocol and the OCDSB policies and procedures take this discretion away, making it a requirement for administrators to notify the police for all mandatory incidents, even if the child is under the age of 12. A more appropriate, child-centred approach would be to allow for the discretion noted in the Provincial Protocol and to give administrators the training and guidance they need to appropriately exercise that discretion in an unbiased way. This is aligned with the philosophy guiding changes made in 2020 to Ontario's suspension and expulsion policies for young children.

A similar revision should be made to clarify administrator discretion for incidents involving children with special education needs. The Provincial Protocol requires police to be notified of mandatory incidents involving children with special education needs.⁷⁶ The Ottawa Protocol recognizes that there are times when a police response is *"neither necessary nor appropriate."*⁷⁷ The OCDSB should consider revising the Ottawa Protocol and associated policies and procedures to clarify that while notification is mandatory, police response is not. Administrators should be aware of this distinction and apply it appropriately to avoid unnecessary interaction between children with special needs and the police, particularly when the behaviour involves stress behaviour.

Limit police involvement and police presence and harmonize policies and procedures

"There are some that have no issues and others who will be triggered. Motto should be to use the police as little as possible. Really really think about whether you need to bring the police in or not." Administrator

The experiences documented in this review call for a fundamental, cultural shift in how the OCDSB is viewing police engagement in schools. It is suggested that OCDSB review the 27 policies and procedures that reference police engagement (see **Appendix 2**) and make changes needed to limit police involvement and presence in schools to incident response only and only when required by law or as a last resort. The OCDSB should make serious efforts to map and identify non-police alternatives.

It is also suggested that these policies and procedures be revised to centre and affirm commitment to Indigenous rights, human rights, children's rights and the best interests of the child; to clearly set out the rights and responsibilities of children, students, families and employees; and to create an accessible and safe complaints mechanism for students and families who encounter discrimination in application of the safe schools process.

Some preliminary suggested revisions are outlined in **Appendix 15** and include harmonizing and narrowing the definition of "critical incident" to align with the Provincial Protocol's list of mandatory incidents and increase clarity in application; harmonizing and aligning the requirement to notify the police about weapon possession; introducing a definition of criminal

⁷⁶ Provincial Protocol 2015 at p. 22 to 23.

⁷⁷ Ottawa Protocol 2020 at p. 13.

harassment and a requirement to notify the police of same; and harmonizing the definition of bullying, but removing it from the definition of critical incidents.

CONNECTING PERSPECTIVES HEARD TO REVIEW FINDINGS

In June 2021, Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board completed a comprehensive literature review of research in both Canada and the United States looking at the impact of police involvement in schools. The review looked at 10 sources of Canadian literature, five sources of Canadian school board and academic literature, and 22 sources of American academic literature.

It found that there was no conclusive evidence that school resource officer programs have a causal effect on reducing misbehaviour, safety issues in schools, or improving the school climate.⁷⁸ It noted:

“Although some research reviewed, offered suggestions on improvements that could be made to the School Resource Program, the majority of research points to the link between challenging student behaviour and the deeper systemic, personal, family and community difficulties they face daily. In addition, the research points out the fatal flaw in the program - it puts police in the lives of at-risk youth and equips them with one strategy to address behaviour: the criminal justice system..”⁷⁹

It concluded that resources should be directed away from school policing programs and towards improving partnerships between school, medical, mental health and community programs.⁸⁰

Human rights-based reviews from other school districts

A number of other school boards in Ontario have also undertaken human rights-based reviews of the police involvement in school programs. Some are still underway. Below is information on school boards across Ontario that have or are currently reviewing the presence of police in schools:

Table 12: Summary of Ontario school board reviews of SRO programs

Date	School Board	Type of SRO program	Decision
Ottawa Area			
Current	Ottawa-Carleton District School Board	SROs’ roles include education, prevention and intervention. 24 SROs across 4 school boards	Under review - decision pending

⁷⁸ CBC News, January 21, 2021 accessed on May 2, 2021 <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/hamilton/hwdsb-police-liaison-letter-1.5887602>

⁷⁹ HWDSB, Literature Review (2021) at p. 17

⁸⁰ HWDSB, Literature Review (2021) at p. 17

Current	Ottawa Catholic School Board	SROs' roles include education, prevention and intervention. 24 SROs across 4 school boards	Education about SRO role
No review	French Language Public School Board	SROs' roles include education, prevention and intervention. 24 SROs across 4 school boards	No review
No review	French Language Catholic School Board	SROs' roles include education, prevention and intervention	No review
Outside Ottawa Area			
Current	Waterloo Region District School Board	10 police officers assigned to elementary and secondary schools - proactive and reactive duties. ⁸¹	Police involvement paused by the Board in June 2020 while the program is under review. ⁸²
Current	Thames Valley District School Board in collaboration with the London District Catholic School Board	SROs' roles include education, prevention and intervention. ⁸³ Some are dedicated to one school and others cover a range of schools and are not assigned to schools on a full-time basis	Under review - decision pending
April 2021	Upper Grand District School Board	SROs are engaged in education, prevention and intervention. Some are dedicated to one school and others cover a range of schools and are not assigned to schools on a full-time basis. ⁸⁴	School board trustees voted to discontinue the SRO program after an extensive review of students, staff and community members found disproportionate, negative impacts on marginalized students (racialized and students with disabilities).

⁸¹ Waterloo Regional Police webpage accessed on May 2, 2021

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

⁸² See <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/kitchener-waterloo/school-resource-officer-wrdsb-1.5614012> accessed on June 2, 2021

⁸³ <https://www.tvdsb.ca/Modules/News/index.aspx?newsId=0ddeea2-7649-4dad-b9c4-ba1c234927f9>

⁸⁴ Upper Grand District School Board, Police Presence in Schools Task Force Report, March 18, 2021 accessed on May 2, 2021

<https://www.ugdsb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/2021-03-23-Police-Presence-in-Schools-Task-Force.pdf>

November 2020	Peel District School Board	One SRO is assigned to each secondary school. One SRO assigned to several elementary and middle schools. ⁸⁵	Peel Regional Police Service announced a permanent end to the school resource officer program.
June 2020	Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board	Not stationed in schools. 11 police officers supported 196 schools with lockdown drills, investigations and education sessions.	School board trustees voted to end the SRO program based on recommendations from their human rights and equity community advisory committee. Based on a literature review that found lack of evidence to support positive benefits, and significant evidence to support harm, in January 2021, HWDSB wrote to the province asking the province to review and replace police programs in schools with more support for health, families and the schools themselves based on a literature review that found “no definitive conclusion that the program has a causal effect on reducing misbehaviour, safety issues in schools, or improving the school climate”.
November 2017	Toronto District School Board	Full time police officer stationed in each school.	Discontinued the SRO program based on consultations with thousands of students, staff, parents and community members. The report found that while many students had a positive impression of the program, a number of students said that the presence of an SRO made them feel uncomfortable, intimidated and/or watched or targeted.

In 2017 the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) undertook a review of its school resource officer program.⁸⁶ The collected data revealed mixed feelings about the impact of the school

⁸⁵ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/peel-police-resource-officer-program-cancelled-1.5807706>

⁸⁶ Toronto District School Board, School Resource Officer Program Review, November 15, 2017 accessed on May 1, 2021
<https://www.tdsb.on.ca/Leadership/Boardroom/Agenda-Minutes/Type/A?Folder=Agenda%2f20171115&Filename=171115+School+Resource+Off+3269+FINAL.pdf>

resource officer program. However, of significant concern were the findings that indicated a negative impact and potential harm experienced by some students.

A majority of students in the focus groups indicated that they were very uncomfortable having the school resource police officer in their school, reporting feeling intimidated and like they were under continual surveillance. They reported staying away from school. Students spoke of the stigma associated with having a school resource police officer assigned to their school, and the impact of this perception on both the school and their community as a whole. They noted the disproportionate presence of school resource police officers at schools with a high proportion of racialized students and felt that they were already overly policed that the presence of police officers in schools made them feel like they were targets for discrimination.⁸⁷

Community members and former students of TDSB echoed the sentiments of the students, noting being uncomfortable, afraid and in particular of the uniform and the fact that officers were armed.⁸⁸ These sentiments were particularly shared by Black male students. They felt like trained adults such as social workers and child and youth counsellors would better fill the role than the SRO.⁸⁹

The TDSB report noted that serious concerns had been brought forward by a significant number of students. It also noted that the presence of school resource police officers made these students feel less safe, less welcome and less engaged in learning. It recognized the overt systemic discrimination faced by these students and negative impact it had on their achievement, well-being and ability to be successful in their future lives. The report highlighted the Board's clear duty to act to address and mitigate these concerns, irrespective of the fact that many people also reported positive aspects of the program. The Board voted to discontinue the school resource police program in schools.⁹⁰

More recently, in June 2020 the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB) also voted to discontinue police involvement in schools on the basis of unanimous recommendations from its advisory committee on human rights and equity based on substantial community pressure because of the harm caused to marginalized students.

In March 2021 the Upper Grand District School Board (UGDSB) published the results of an extended review of police presence in its schools.⁹¹ The report made a number of recommendations, including the discontinuation of the school resource officer program. These recommendations were approved by the board in April 2021.

Consistent with the findings reported by the HWDSB literature review, the UGDSB review also found that "marginalized communities are more likely to experience the negative impacts of school policing."⁹² It noted broad community support from both the BIPOC and white community to remove police from schools and that despite a police perspective that the program was

⁸⁷ Ibid at p. 3

⁸⁸ Ibid at p. 4

⁸⁹ Ibid at p. 4

⁹⁰ Ibid at p. 5

⁹¹ Upper Grand District School Board, Police Presence in Schools Task Force Report, March 18, 2021 accessed on May 2, 2021

<https://www.ugdsb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/2021-03-23-Police-Presence-in-Schools-Task-Force.pdf>

⁹²Ibid at p. 73

intended to build relationships, “it is clear however that the negative impacts of police in schools are disproportionately felt by racialized and marginalized communities”.⁹³

The UGDSB took an equity and human rights-based approach to the review. The task force noted that policing in schools is not well researched across Canada and elsewhere⁹⁴ and recognized that which does exist tends to focus on the impact of SROs on school safety and the results of these studies are inconclusive.⁹⁵

The Review of the Peel District School Board also touched on issues of policing in schools. It noted complaints from members of the PDSB, both Black and non-Black, that teachers and principals were not implementing progressive discipline, that teachers and principals escalate trivial issues unnecessarily and that they were involving the police for minor issues leading to arrests and stigmatization of Black children at a very young age. The report observed that Black children are leaving the PDSB because it is not safe for them.⁹⁶

THE WAY FORWARD

“What else do we need to say? We have shared our trauma, what now?” Black Employee

Similar to what was heard by the TDSB, HWDSB, and UGDSB, a significant proportion of the OCDSB school community has shared that the presence of police officers in schools makes them feel less safe, less welcome and less engaged. OCDSB’s first priority must be to the safety, wellness and educational success of its students.

The right to education is a fundamental right of every child. Realizing that right for every child, is the core business of the OCDSB. This means that OCDSB bears the duty to take proactive steps to remove barriers to ensure that every child has the equal opportunity to access their education without discrimination. It is clear from the information that came forward during the review process, that the current practice of involving police in schools is creating barriers for some Indigenous, Black and marginalized students that prevent them from fully enjoying their right to education without discrimination. It is evident that the way OCDSB is currently using police to regulate behaviour of children in school is disproportionately impacting on children with disabilities and who are Indigenous, racialized and 2SLGBTQ+. It is also evident that the inclusion of the police in the school community is creating barriers to the educational success of some Indigenous, Black and marginalized students who do not feel safe in the schools as a result. Connections were made between police presence in schools and disproportionate discipline of Indigenous, Black and marginalized students, lower attendance rates and higher push-out rates which all contribute to the school-to-prison pipeline.

⁹³Ibid at p. 74

⁹⁴ UGDSB, Task Force Report 2021 citing Petrosino, A., Guckenburg, S., & Fronius, T. (2012) ‘Policing Schools’ Strategies: A Review of the Evaluation Evidence, Journal of MultiDisciplinary Evaluation, Volume 8, Number 17.

⁹⁵ UGDSB, Task Force Report 2021 citing Broll, R. & Howells, S. (2019) *Community Policing in Schools: Relationship-Building and the Responsibilities of School Resource Officers*, Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice

⁹⁶ Chadha, E., Herbert S. and Richard S. (2020). Review of the Peel District School Board accessed on May 25, 2021 <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/new/review-peel-district-school-board-report-en.pdf>

A rights-based approach to education requires the OCDSB to make fundamental changes to remove these barriers. The roadmap for achieving this is set out in the international human rights instruments that should act as a compass for OCDSB practice. The OCDSB should centre Indigenous rights, human rights and children's rights as it navigates changes to respond to concerns highlighted. Every child has the right to participate in decision-making that impacts on them, to have their voice heard and be given due weight in accordance with their development. Every child has the right to have their own best interests centred in decision-making about them. Children in the district have spoken and shared their perspectives and the OCDSB should centre these voices as it charts a new direction forward.

Changes need to be made to limit police engagement in schools, create monitoring and accountability mechanisms for when police do need to be involved and to re-centre the engagement, welcoming and success of all students in the school setting.

It is important to honour and hear the brave voices that came forward during this process and make changes that will address the issues raised, rebuild pride and a sense of belonging in the schools they attend and limit engagement with law enforcement. This is aligned with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's [Calls to Action](#) and recommendations put forward following the [National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls](#). It is also aligned with the commitments this Board made when it endorsed the [International Decade for People of African Descent](#), including the commitments to recognition, justice and development, the commitments made to identifying and removing barriers to success in the OCDSB [Indigenous Education, Equity and Human Rights Roadmap](#) and OCDSB's commitment to cultivating a culture of caring and social responsibility.

"I don't believe the Board will listen to me. I still wanted to come because it is really important and it matters." Indigenous Student

"I want the Board to take a step back, reflect and put themselves in our shoes, maybe then they'll understand what some students feel." Black Student

"I hope it is also clear that some perspectives ARE more important than others when this report is made ... Students who are scared and hurt by police should be prioritized, even if some students, white students, may have good experiences sometimes. No one should be intimidated or unsafe at school. No amount of harm is acceptable." Racialized Community Member

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: That the OCDSB end its participation in the School Resource Officer Program.

Recommendation 2: That the OCDSB revise and harmonize all relevant contractual commitments, policies and procedures to limit police involvement at schools to necessary involvement, introduce accountability and transparency mechanisms for all police involvement and embed Indigenous rights, human rights and children's rights and survivor-centred practices.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Steering group terms of reference

Steering Group Review of Police Involvement in Schools

This steering group is an informal mechanism. It will be made up of approximately 16 people including students, parents/guardians/caregivers, community representatives, and a representative of ACE, IEAC, and SEAC (non-staff and non-Trustee members). The steering group will guide and support the OCDSB staff leading the review. To ensure that student voice is centered, efforts will be made to ensure that at least 50% of the steering group's members are students. Members of the steering group will be inclusive of First Nations, Métis, Inuit, Black, Muslim, 2SLGBTQ+, newcomers and people receiving mental health support or in special education programming.

The steering group will support the identification of sources of scholarship and study for the literature review, identification of people and groups to be consulted, review of the consultation tools. The steering group will also be consulted on interpretation of the results of the consultation, development of the consultation's recommendations, and the revised policy draft.

Engagement with the steering group will include virtual meetings and email communication for updates and input throughout the consultation process. Updates to ACE, IEAC and SEAC will be made through their member representatives. The steering group is an informal mechanism. Quorum is not required for meetings or engagement to proceed.

Criteria for participation

- Lived experience as a person or parent/guardian/caregiver of a person who is Indigenous, Black, or minoritized (racialized including because of religious identity, 2SLGBTQ+, living with a disability including mental health challenges or dysregulated behaviour, and/or experiencing poverty)

Or

- Demonstrated interest in, experience volunteering with or working on equity or human rights issues

Or

- Experience conducting human rights-centred reviews of programs

Role and responsibilities

- Voluntary role
- Time commitment of approximately 2 hours per month from December 2020 through to September 2021
- Good faith, collaborative approach to participation
- Representatives from IEAC, ACE and SEAC responsible for reporting back and providing updates to their Council and Committee members each month on progress of the consultation

Appendix 2 - OCDSB policies and procedures that reference police involvement

OCDSB Policies and Procedures That Reference Police Involvement				
No.	Name	Number	Section	Summary
1	Police Involvement in Schools	P.043.SCO	Entire policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sets out objectives of collaboration with police • Requires Board to facilitate access for police • Identifies SRO as main police contact with school
2	Police Involvement in Schools	PR.533.SCO	Entire procedure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies critical incidents that require principals to contact police. Note: These are wider than those mandated by the Provincial Protocol • Identifies the SRO as a response to issues through prevention, intervention and enforcement strategies. • SRO may be called upon both formally and informally by the school principal when it is felt that police intervention is in the best interests of a student <u>and/or the school</u>. • Establishes investigation rights of police • Establishes information sharing requirements of Principal • Establishes rules for consent, parental involvement and interviews for under 12s, 12 to 17s and adult students. • Discusses arrests and warrants • Requires Principals to report all incidents reported to the police in accordance with PR.528.SCO Critical Incident Review Process
3	Critical Incident Review Process	PR.528.SCO	1.0, 3.1(c), 4.1(a)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to establish procedures for reporting critical incidents to the police and the Ministry of Education • critical incidents reported to police, regardless of age of child
4	Weapons	PR.525.SCO	4.1(d), 4.2(c), 4.3(c)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For possession, police <i>may</i> be involved and charges may be laid (PR.525.SCO)

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For possession of weapons combined <i>with</i> threatening to use police <i>must</i> be involved. The procedure doesn't say what to do if there is a threat to use the weapon but no possession. • For use of a weapon, police <i>must</i> be involved • Critical Incident Form OCDSB 653 must be completed, filed internally in the OSR and submitted to the Superintendent of Safe Schools and the designated staff person on the CIRC.
5	Investigation, Search and Seizure	PR.534.SCO	4.1, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police may only <i>independently</i> conduct a search if they produce a search warrant or other legal authority • The Principal may search Board property any time without prior notice, provided the Principal has reasonable and probable grounds • If there are reasonable and probable grounds that an offence which <i>requires</i> police involvement has been committed, the principal or designate <i>will</i> contact Ottawa Police Services • Upon reasonable and probable grounds that there has been a serious breach of the school code of conduct, including but not limited to possession of a weapon or an illegal substance, and that a search of a student's property would reveal evidence of such a breach, the principal <i>will at their discretion</i> contact the police or carry out the search with a witness and the student. • Reasonable and probable grounds that the student possesses a weapon, the principal <i>may</i> contact the police • If there are reasonable and probable grounds that a criminal investigation will result from a search, the police should be consulted prior to the search and/or attend the search for evidentiary purposes
6	Safe Schools	PR.521.SCO	4.19, 4.20, 4.22, 4.25, 4.26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • will offer in-service programs to raise staff awareness of procedures for involvement in police investigation and legal rights of students when being questioned • schools <i>will</i> develop, maintain and strengthen relationships with the police • schools <i>will</i> communicate information about violent acts

				<p>committed or likely to be committed, whether on or off Board property, to the School Resource Officer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • if staff believe student or visitor poses immediate danger, they <i>must</i> obtain police assistance immediately • defines violent and critical incident and <i>requires</i> all critical incidents to be reported to the police and <i>requires</i> all to be recorded using the Critical Incident Report Form OCDSB 654
7	Student Suspension and Expulsion	P.026.SCO	3.38	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all critical incidents, regardless of age of child, must be reported to police
8	Alleged Harassment/Abuse of a Student by a Student)	PR.544.SCO	4.3, 4.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • if the behaviour is a critical incident, must follow procedures in PR.528.SCO for reporting to police • Principal has duty to inform victims of victim support services offered by police
9	Guidelines for Dealing with Reports of Strangers Approaching Students	P.042.SCO	2.1(c)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • requires Board to maintain close working relationship with police
10	Guidelines for Dealing with Reports of Strangers Approaching Students	PR.532.SCO	4.1(b), 4.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • requires Principal to immediately notify police
11	Reporting Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect - Student Under 16 Years of Age	P.090.SCO	2.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recognizes protocol with police and CAS that covers responses to child abuse
12	Reporting Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect - Child Under 16 Years of Age	PR.605.SCO	4.17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • police may accompany child protection worker to apprehend child in need of protection and must have court order or warrant authorizing it

13	Alleged Suspected Violence within a Student's Family	P.091.SCO	3.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Director may issue procedures that support students, families and, where involved, the Children's Aid Society of Ottawa, police and shelter in serving the child;
14	Alleged Suspected Violence Within a Student's Family	PR.606.SCO	4.1(h)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the event a student discloses or suspicion exists of incidents of family violence, staff <i>will</i> in case of an urgent situation when school supports are not available, contact the School Resource Officer (SRO) or supervising Youth Division sergeant at Ottawa Police Service
15	Student Substance Abuse	PR.523.SCO	4.1, 4.4(a) and (d), 4.6(c), 4.7(c)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Principals <i>will</i> ensure that all students receive alcohol, cannabis, and drug education and are <i>encouraged</i> to seek assistance from police deliver confiscated alcohol, drugs, cannabis or other prohibited substance to police for identification principal <i>will</i> consult with the police when they have reasonable and probable grounds to believe that a student is in possession of alcohol, drugs, cannabis or other prohibited substance principal <i>will</i> seek advice and assistance from police when they have reasonable and probable grounds to believe a student is giving alcohol or cannabis to a minor trafficking in controlled or prohibited substances, Principal <i>will</i> contact the police
16	Access to School/Board Premises	PR.524.SCO	3.6, 3.8, 3.9(d)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> authorized person may call police to lay charge if trespasser causes property damage or will not leave call police to make arrest neighbours should be encouraged to call police if they have concern about school security after hours
17	Custody and Access to Students by Parents/Guardians	PR.531.SCO	4.7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Principals <i>should</i> take reasonable steps to prevent unauthorized access to a student by his/her parents, including, where necessary, contacting the police for assistance and intervention.

18	School Dances (secondary)	PR.560.SCO	4.1(c)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> school dances <i>must</i> include two police (ideally SROs)
19	Bomb Threats	PR.604.SCO	Entire policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> call 911 immediately
20	Crisis Prevention, Intervention and Postvention	PR.607.SCO	4.13, 4.16, 4.17, Appendix B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In immediate risk situations (e.g., life threatening emergency or crime in progress) requiring an immediate police response, the principal or designate <i>will</i>: a) activate the school lockdown/secure school plan to ensure safety for all; and b) call 911 and the OCDSB emergency line (613-596-8765) If behaviours appear high risk, a police incident report <i>will</i> be initiated, as outlined in the Protocols to Accompany Safe Schools Policies in the City of Ottawa. The principal <i>will</i> proceed to a Violence/Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA) with school and LSS staff and invite the SRO/designate, as per the Community based Violence/Threat Assessment Protocol. Urgent Care for Mental Health Protocol at Appendix B directs If serious threat-making behaviour is involved, consult with <i>SRO</i> and your school Social Worker or Psychologist (see VTRA protocol)
21	Confidential Communication Between Students and Staff	PR.608.SCO	4.3(b)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff will generally keep communication from a student confidential <i>except</i> at the specific request of a third party, for example, the parent(s) and/or police, in accordance with the provisions of the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.
22	Bullying Prevention and Intervention	PR.659.SCO	4.4(j)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> identifies school resource officer as an intervention strategy to address bullying
23	Alleged Employee Misconduct Towards a Student	P.103.HR	1.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> collaborative working relationship with police and CAS to assist with employee misconduct in their jurisdiction

24	Alleged Employee Misconduct Towards a Student	PR.542.HR	4.1(a)(iv)l, 4.4(a),	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • when an allegation is received the Principal <i>will</i> advise the employee whether its reportable to the police • superintendent may cooperate with the police with some investigations
25	Alleged Harassment of a Student	PR.525.HR	4.8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • if principal believes it is a critical incident, the principal will follow procedures for reporting critical incidents and contacting police
26	Student Safety Patrol	P.084.SCO	3.3, 4.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consultation with SRO developing program
27	Student Safety Patrol	PR.612.SCO	1.0, 4.2,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School-based safety patrol program (crossing guards), by students, in partnership with the OPS. When developing the program the Principal is to consult with the SRO, the Ottawa Police Service and School Crossing Patrols for the school area. SRO gives advice. SROs provide annual training to the school patrollers. • SRO advised on appropriateness and location of school patrols • SRO participates in annual reviews of safety and appropriateness of continuing the program given the age of the students involved, the number of students involved and any other concerns that may arise (P.084.SCO - Student Safety Patrols)

Appendix 3 - Summary of group discussions offered

Group Discussions			
Description	Stakeholder Group	Date	Participants
Students			
African and Afro-Caribbean descent and Black	Students	March 10, 2021	26
Gloucester and Ridgemont*	Students	March 25, 2021	12
2SLGBTQ+	Students	March 29, 2021	10
General* (not identity-based)	Students	April 7, 2021	6
African and Afro-Caribbean descent and Black*	Students	April 8, 2021	3
Indigenous	Students	May 6, 2021	1
Racialized	Students	Cancelled	No registrants
		TOTAL	58
Parents, Guardians, Caregivers and Community Members			
Somali-speaking (interpretation provided)	Parents/Guardians and Community Members	March 23, 2021	36
Arabic-speaking (interpretation provided)	Parents/Guardians and Community Members	March 25, 2021	8
General (not identity based registration)*	Parents/Guardians and Community Members	March 25, 2021	30
Gloucester and Ridgemont*	Parents/Guardians	March 31, 2021	15
2SLGBTQ+	Parents/Guardians and Community Members	April 6, 2021	11
Disability	Parents/Guardians and Community Members	April 6, 2021	13
African and Afro-Caribbean descent and Black*	Parents/Guardians and Community Members	April 8, 2021	18

General* (not identity-based)	Parents/Guardians and Community Members	April 9, 2021	43
Indigenous	Parents/Guardians and Community Members	May 10, 2021	15
		TOTAL	189
Employees			
Principals and Vice Principals	Employees	5 sessions March 15, 2021 March 15, 2021 March 16, 2021 March 18, 2021 March 18, 2021	82
Muslim	Employees	April 19, 2021	16
African descent/Black	Employees	April 20, 2021	22
2SLGBTQ+	Employees	April 20, 2021	13
Disability	Employees	April 21, 2021	6
Indigenous	Employees	April 22, 2021	3
Racialized	Employees	April 27, 2021	8
General	Employees	April 26, 2021 April 29, 2021	27
		TOTAL	177

*sessions facilitated by Dennery Resources Inc.

Appendix 4 - Summary of key informant interviews

Key Informant Interviews by Stakeholder Group	
Stakeholder Group	Number of Kils
Students and Former Students	6
Parents and Community Members	5
Administrators	11
Employees and Former Employees	9
OPS	1
TOTAL	32
Key Informant Interviews by Identity Group*	
Indigenous	7
Black	7
Arabic Speaking	2
Disability	2
2SLGBTQ+	2
Not disclosed	13
GHS and RHS Catchment Area	16

*because of intersections of identity this does not total 32

Appendix 5 - Summary of written submissions

Written Submissions by Stakeholder Group	
Stakeholder Group	Number
Administrators	4
Employees and Former Employees	5
Parents	7
Community Members	8
Students and Former Students	1
TOTAL	25
Written Submissions by Identity Group*	
Indigenous	2
Black	2
Arabic Speaking	1
Racialized	2
Disability	0
2SLGBTQ+	3
GHS and RHS catchment area	3
Not disclosed	15

*because of intersections of identity this does not total 25

Appendix 6 - Perspectives shared by Indigenous communities

These discussions about education and police involvement are taking place on unceded and unsurrendered Algonquin territory. Therefore, it is also important to centre the voices of the Algonquin people in their territory. Within this Algonquin territory, there are many of the First Nations, Metis and Inuit people who call this territory home. We need to listen to their voices too.

Discussions with Indigenous students, parents and guardians, Elders, community members, and employees made it clear that consideration of the impacts of police involvement in schools on Indigenous peoples cannot be fully understood without taking into account the genocide against Indigenous Peoples that was brought about by colonialism, the residential school system and the human rights and Indigenous rights' abuses committed against missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQ+ people. It is within this context that police involvement in schools must be considered.

Small group discussions and one-on-one interviews were held with Indigenous students, parents and guardians, Elders, community members and employees. Two written submissions were received. Minutes from the indigenous Education Advisory Council meeting were reviewed where they documented discussions about police involvement in schools. Feedback from people who identified as indigenous in the anonymous public survey was also considered.

A range of opinions were expressed in the group discussions. What came through clearly was that Indigenous Peoples are not a monolith and that the experiences and perspectives of everyone, and in particular students, should be centred when charting the way forward.

"It's important for the school board to recognize that Indigenous Peoples are not a monolith ... This always happens for Indigenous Peoples - one person agrees with the institution so you say it's ok even though you've already talked to hundreds of others who say differently." Indigenous Community Member

Themes emerged around the intergenerational trauma of residential schools and colonialism still impacting today on how Indigenous people feel when they interact with police and the harm it can trigger. Other concerns were raised about the ongoing over-policing and surveillance of Indigenous Peoples by the police. It was recalled that participation in peaceful protests for Indigenous rights is regularly met with a heavily-armed police presence including snipers pointing guns at unarmed participants, including youth.

"It's not the officer that's the issue. It's the colonial history of being policed that is the problem. The fact that they are wearing a uniform is not a signal of trust and safety. The stigma against police officers is from our intergenerational trauma of being over policed. Fear and hesitance in approaching a police officer is very much warranted because of the history that has been put upon us as a People." Indigenous Parent

"As an Indigenous parent who has a long standing mistrust of the police and of being surveilled, I have tried not to pass it on to my child but intergenerational stuff happens and it never leaves my daughter. So when she goes to Gloucester that is what she feels and that is an experience that others who have never had a history of trauma will never understand." Indigenous Parent

“As an Indigenous person you are often watched - everything you do is watched.”
Indigenous Community Member

Participants in discussions recounted personal experiences within their own families and circles that led to a profound distrust and fear of police. Stories of parents being taken away; homes being raided and searched; children being taken into care; children’s dysregulated behaviour being responded to by a police officer to the detriment of the child’s mental health; parents going missing and police refusing to search for them; wellness calls being answered with a family member being tasered; being arrested. Participants spoke of *“fear”*, of *“raised blood pressure”* when seeing a police officer, of *“shaking”* after learning their child had an encounter with the police. Underlying all of these stories of pain were the impacts of intergenerational trauma and blood memory.

“And there is a fear of cops. There is definitely a fear. For some non-Indigenous folks they might feel protected when they see a cop, but I’ve never seen an Indigenous person say that and that’s why youth aren’t coming out to speak out about this. I also feel scared to talk about it. I’ve been arrested and tackled by a cop when I was 18 years old. Someone called the cops because I was being “rowdy” and the cops were looking for me. When I finally decided to go back and deal with it the cops were there and I was literally just walking - not screaming, not hurting anyone - and they threw me in the back of a cop car. I was crying.”
Indigenous Community Member

Links were consistently made by participants between racism and the higher level of police presence at schools with larger Indigenous and racialized populations. It was noted that increased police presence does not have a preventative effect but in fact leads to the criminalization of behaviour by Indigenous students. It was also noted that the practice of using police to respond to incidents at school is not aligned with Indigenous Peoples customs, traditions and beliefs. One administrator recalled a time that an Indigenous student was triggered when an SRO walked into an Indigenous space at school without being invited and highlighted their own error in not recognizing the impact that the police officer’s presence there might have on an Indigenous student.

“There were experiences in my student life where police officers have physically pulled me out of my classroom. This strained relationships with my teachers and peers.” Indigenous Student

“We cannot solve all cases of bullying but we can if the bully is the SRO; we can if it’s a person we are bringing into the building to promote safety but in reality it is promoting racial bias and promoting segregation which I have seen first hand.”
Indigenous Student

“Racism is evident in the enforcement of the law. When the police are brought into a school to deal with a student’s behaviour, the perception of the situation in the eyes of the school community is tainted thereby changing the nature of the event into a criminalized occurrence.” Indigenous Education Advisory Council (IEAC) Participant

“If there are societal teachings to give to kids it shouldn’t be a police officer giving them because they are a representative of a punitive society. Indigenous peoples

didn't have cops, we have Elders and Grandparents to do the teaching."
Algonquin Parent and Community Member

"We need to flip the conversation on its head. We need to talk about how we can decolonize the discussion around education ... Police are not what I want to see involved in school. Instead, we should ask the police service board and the school board to tell us what has been the positive benefit of police involvement and look at it in the context of all students; don't ask us to tell you what has been the bad.

The police presence in school, I suspect, did not come from the Indigenous community. I suspect it did not originate because Indigenous people asked for it... If police in schools were simply being treated as an introduction to services that you might need to use, that might be ok but that's not what we're talking about. We're talking about a level of authority that has been shown to lead to negative outcomes for racialized students and families." Indigenous Community Member

"Look at the story of Chantal Moore. People say it was just happening in New Brunswick, but it happens all over. Even here in Ottawa there are at least 5 Indigenous peoples who have been murdered. When we see the faces of people who have been murdered by the police, we can see ourselves in them. It's scary. It could have been me." Indigenous Community Member

Some expressed an openness to the idea of building positive relationships between Indigenous Peoples and the police and felt that school was an appropriate place to do this, but others felt strongly that school was not the place for those relationships to be cultivated.

"... The officers who go to schools truly are the 'good cops'. They are professional, they are honourable and are not racist or dangerous to the emotional health of our young people. Let them (the officers) prove it to our students. Not all cops are bad! ...

I believe that if we deny our young people (students) an opportunity to speak to and get to know a police officer, we make a grave mistake. If a student is in such fear of the police, then I recommend counselling for him/her. I would very much appreciate the opportunity to sit in a circle with a student who is terrified of the police to hopefully calm them and bring peace to their mind. Police in the community is a fact that will never change. Let's make the best of it and seize the opportunity before us. Change for the good is more possible than not by having honourable police officers in our schools." Algonquin Elder

Other Algonquin community members also noted the lack of trust between Indigenous communities and the police but felt strongly that school was not the place to repair that relationship, noting the harm that exposure to police officers can create.

"What are we telling our children when we are trying to make them create a relationship with the police -- that the onus is on the child? It shouldn't be, it should be on the system..."

... it feels like a trick to tell Indigenous kids to have a great relationship with a cop -- until they pull you over, or they think you did something wrong, or your brother gets beat up, or you are taken on a starlight tour ...

... it's systemic. You're expecting them to build a relationship with the police but you are asking them to play nice with the abuser. It doesn't matter that it's a different guy. It matters that it's the uniform." Algonquin Parent and Community Member

Positive interactions with police at school were reported by some Indigenous survey respondents. When they were asked to describe what made the interaction positive, the descriptions focused on the demeanor of the police officer - smiling, being friendly and polite, being professional and supporting. Some participants reinforced the idea that exposure to positive interactions with the police will lead to positive relationships between students and the police.

"I think we have to move past the idea that police are bad. While I know there is traditional mistrust for many - this needs to be overcome through understanding. Understanding comes through sharing of ideas and respectful good interactions." Indigenous Participant

"People who are feeling unsafe around police officers have their own issues, let's not make it everyone else's to deal with, it's ridiculous! Having police officers available in school allows children to feel more safe around officers, having a better understanding of their role, will feel more comfortable approaching them when in danger and make the schools a safer place." Indigenous Participant

Negative interactions were also reported by respondents. These respondents recalled interactions where police officers were *"overly suspicious, demeaning and intimidating"* and that involved *"over-policing"*. One person reported confinement and unnecessary use of force, another recalled a police officer opening the door to their car at drop off without asking permission, and another recalled not being given sufficient options by the police when experiencing abuse at home. Other experiences shared included:

"They harass us, people have been surprised with a call for you to go to the office with zero warning or knowledge and forced to be interrogated by them, they instantly treat you like a criminal, threaten and accuse you of things you've heard absolutely nothing about." Indigenous Survey Participant

"Our experience with the police in school altered my daughter's life profoundly - she and I no longer have any faith police exist to protect people - the complete lack of racial understanding and heteronormative proud swagger behavior is appalling." Indigenous Survey Participant

"Police presence does not create safety in our communities or within schools. Many "roles" you describe above could be managed by other helping professionals. Police are and should only be used in an emergency situation. We also know that each community/area has youth officers already assigned. Children and youth of all races, cultures, ethnicities and beliefs need to feel safe at school and that includes from the police." Indigenous Survey Participant

“Indigenous people have been and are still abused, assaulted and killed by police. For the school to wield the power of calling in the police, is too much.” Indigenous Survey Participant

The notion of police involvement in school is premised on the assumption that involvement of police in schools contributes to safety at school and that increased exposure to police increases positive relationships between students and police. However, when asked about these assumptions 43% of Indigenous respondents disagreed that having police in schools made schools a safer place, with 28% sharing that they felt uncomfortable to attend school because of the police officer’s presence.

Looking at assumptions around relationship building 49% of Indigenous respondents did not agree with the idea of having police in schools to build relationships with students and families. They either disagreed, weren’t sure, felt like it should only happen as a last resort or felt like that role was better handled by non-police.

The strategy of having police in schools to make students more comfortable with police was also called into question with 41% of Indigenous students disagreeing that police presence at school made them more comfortable with police and an additional 12% not sure. In fact, 29% of the respondents reported being intimidated by the police presence at school and 31% reported feeling like they were being watched or targeted.

One student noted that they would like to have a positive relationship with a police officer, but they would never dare speak to them at school for fear of being labeled as a “narc” by other kids. Another spoke of the desire to learn to feel more comfortable around police officers so that they could avoid acting “weird” [out of fear] in the future when they get pulled over. This observation of self-preservation was telling as it highlighted the assumption that as an Indigenous person they would in fact, be profiled and pulled over and the knowledge that if they acted nervous it could result in negative consequences.

While perspectives and experiences varied, a large proportion of Indigenous people who participated in the review spoke out against police presence in schools citing the harm and trauma that it causes to Indigenous students and families, highlighting that its punitive nature is contrary to Indigenous approaches to conflict and healing and putting the onus on the police themselves to work to rebuild trust and relationships, outside of the school setting. There was a certain level of openness from some participants to having police invited into schools to share information about the services they provide, but only if it was linked to a series of presentations by other service providers as well and if there was a clear commitment from the school to share information with families about the presentations so that parents and guardians could be brought into the process. Overall the preference was for non-police to deliver many of the services that police are currently called upon to deliver in schools.

The participants either disagreed, weren’t sure, felt like someone else should provide it or that police should only be used as a last resort for the following activities:

Table 13: Impact of police involvement based on perceptions of Indigenous survey respondents

Impact	Agreed or Disagreed	Unsure
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Makes me feel like school is a safer place	43% disagreed	9%
Make me feel watched or target	31% agreed	12%
Make me feel less worried about problems like bullying, drugs, weapons, vandalism, etc.	41% disagreed	14%
Makes me more feel comfortable with police	41% disagreed	12%
Makes me feel uncomfortable to attend school	28% agreed	14%
Makes me feel safer in the neighbourhood	38% disagreed	10%
Makes me feel intimidated by the police presence in school	29% agreed	9%
Makes me feel like my school has a bad reputation because the police are there	30%	21%

Table 14: Percentage of Indigenous respondents who *do not agree*⁹⁷ with having police involved in specific activities or see police involvement as a last resort

Type of Activity	Disagree	Only as a last resort	Prefer this be handled by non-police
Relationship building with students and families	25%	3%	19%
Share information about criminal justice process	6.5%	1.6%	16%
Presentations on the law and safety	8%	0%	16%
Lockdown drills	14.5%	1.6%	27%
Respond to fighting	26%	23%	18%
Respond to trespass	18%	24%	13%
Respond to bullying	26%	21%	19%
Respond to out of control behaviour	13%	16%	21%
Support victims of sexual assault	8%	5%	26%
Support victims of crime	10%	5%	26%

⁹⁷ Includes respondents who selected strongly disagree, disagree, not sure, only as a last resort or who prefer it to be handled by non-police

Appendix 7 - Perspectives shared by communities of African, Black and African-Caribbean Descent

Small group discussions were held with Black students, families, community members and employees to gain insight into perspectives on police involvement in schools. Key informant interviews were also held. Feedback from the survey was also used to inform this summary.

Concerns and experiences with anti-Black racism within both the education and policing, and how it negatively impacts on Black students' achievement permeated the discussion.

Students and other participants in the discussion clearly made the link between having a higher police presence in the school and the school having a higher racialized population of students. They spoke about schools with similar behaviour but police only being deployed to the school with the racialized population, not the one with a predominantly white population, even though the problems are the same.

"There should be no police officers in any school no matter high school or any school or how high crime is... If you say it's because of schools with high crime rates and drugs, we can all admit that these schools are predominantly schools with people of colour and the whole thing of Black people being over represented in crimes starts to rise, because of the presence of police officers there. We are minors. There is no need for police officers to be there trying to prevent crime from happening." Black Student

"We can all agree that the main reason that police should not be in schools is because they are going to target students of colour no matter what. Even if that specific SRO is nice, the whole institution of police officers and what they stand by is racism and it's built on white supremacy and it needs to be eradicated. We can't have police officers in schools anymore because they are a threat to Black students and students of colours. No matter what ... because they overlook white students ..." Black Student

"There are optics of having a police car sitting in front of a school...There is a police car there every day! The community projects additional biases on the racialized population of that school [Gloucester] and the tie is the police officer. These are negative connotations." Black Employee

When discussing safety, some students commented that the presence of police at their school made them feel safe. Other students were neutral. Other students were clearly opposed, indicating that it made them uncomfortable and scared. Participants discounted the narrative that placing police in schools contributed to the prevention of crime and instead linked it to experiences of criminalization of Black people.

"There is always a police officer at the school. I think it's a good idea to have police officers because you know that you're going to be safe in a way. But it's important to have educated police officers who know how to work with students." Black Student

"I wonder who is feeling more safe with the police? Whose safety is it for? Cause I know I don't personally feel more safe, I feel uncomfortable around the police,

even when they're not in my school that often. I feel uncomfortable, especially when they are armed. That just feels dangerous, not safe." Black Student

Concerns were raised about the disproportionate discipline experienced by Black children in the school system compared to their white peers, and specific incidents of racial profiling were shared that occurred both within and outside of the school environment. Employees shared stories of young Black students, including students with significant trauma histories, being exposed to the SRO for relatively benign behaviour. They shared examples of the SROs being regularly called in to address the behaviour of Black children in primary school. They shared examples of similar behaviours between Black and white students, but the administrator only involved the SRO to address the behaviour of the Black student.

"I tried my best to stay out of situations like these because I don't want to be another statistic or another stereotype. For my 4 years I tried my best to stay out of trouble because I knows it's not just getting a warning - it would be heavy consequences not just for him but for people in my community so I tried my best to stay out of trouble," Black Former Student

"From a primary perspective I've seen the SRO used to play the role of disciplinarian for a child who did something wrong. There were two 6 year old children and both used classroom tools to try to hurt other students. One was white and one was Black. The only child who the principal chose to have the officer speak to was the young Somali boy. The principal had no right to subject a 6 year old child to a police officer. The only child who saw the officer was the Black child even though they both did the same thing." Black Employee

"I don't want them in schools. How many times do staff have to be made to feel uncomfortable until we don't want them there? How many times do they need to profile? I have a little boy who is a Black child. We all have biases but I would be afraid for him, having an SRO at school, because I don't know how he is going to be judged. As a mother, community member and employee, I don't want them there." Black Employee

Students, parents, community members and employees shared personal experiences of witnessing a young Black student being tackled to the floor for riding his own bicycle, when the police officer at school assumed he was stealing it; of being racially profiled by police officers on their way to school and at places around school. Examples were shared of the threat of involving the police by educators being used to scare Black children. One student shared his experience of having a teacher wrongly assume he had been involved in a fight and then threatening him with police involvement.

"They are weaponizing the police. Black men fear that at any time someone can call the police as a weapon. The "karen's" calling the cops because they see or assume something suspicious - walking while Black or jogging while Black - it's a genuine fear because we see it all the time. Just doing nothing and you can get the cops called on you. Sometimes nothing happens but sometimes you get arrested, sometimes you get traumatized. It's not something that should be taken lightly." Former Black Student

The concept of relationship building was referenced by some. Employees noted that over the years the SRO program had moved away from its proactive, relationship building roots, towards

a more reactive role within schools. It was observed that SROs main role is to make the job of administrators easier and that their advice function to administrators could be fulfilled over the phone, rather than in person at schools. One employee commented that during their entire teaching career at OCDSB they had never seen the proactive, relationship building side of the SRO in action. Some students who came forward for the consultations, shared positive views of the SRO based on friendly interactions they had at school, but this was not the reality for all students. Other students described staying away from the police officers and noted the wide disconnect between officers and the students.

“Gloucester seems like this crazy kind of school but we’re really not like that. There’s not many problems that arise. Most of the time the officer is just there to connect with us and talk to us. Honestly my old SRO was really really nice and I didn’t have a problem with him at all... at first, obviously seeing him was like “whoa”, but after I had a conversation with him I was able to see he was just trying to make conversation.” Black Student

“There shouldn’t be police in schools. There shouldn’t be assigned officers that have no connection to the school at all. They call them School Resource Officers but there is almost no connection between the officers and the students. I was well known in the school but I don’t know anyone in the school who interacted with the officers or even knew their names. There is such a disconnect between the police and the students. It’s more like fear mongering and knowing that you have to keep in line at times. Relationship building does not exist. There is no relationship between students and police. There might be between teachers but not with students. So then, what is the point? The teachers aren’t the ones seen as criminals.” Former Black Student

Students with low police presence commented on rarely seeing the police officers unless they were responding to incidents like, for example, a bomb threat. Others, students even in schools where there was a high police presence, noted that not many incidents happened that required a police response. One student shared their experience of attending an education session where an SRO reportedly denied the existence of racism in Canada.

The police uniform, and in particular the fact that SROs are armed when they are at school made students uncomfortable and scared. The combination of having an armed police officer at school and the link that students made to the perceived targeting of Black people by law enforcement and biased discipline in education caused worry.

“Personally with a police officer in my school in terms of them being armed and having weapons it makes a lot of people uncomfortable, particularly those who are targeted by police but as I grow up and learn more about racism I do understand that ... especially after the BLM movement I’ve become more and more conscious around police and that I might not be looking at them the same way that they are looking at me ... they’re looking at me different from my friends but they ARE looking at me different from my friends because of the colour of my skin ... and that’s something to always think about. Even if you don’t feel like you are being targeted, you are, for the most part.”

Links were made between insufficient mental health support in schools and student behaviour. Students, families and employees commented on the need to increase mental health support

available to students to help address root causes of behaviour. This was preferred over a policing presence.

“These police officers are responding to issues of students acting out, but we are never addressing the issues of why students are acting out and how we can help them rather than punishing them. It just makes the situation get worse and snowballs.” Black Student

“When I was talking about mental health before, it’s a super serious thing. Some people only have just a home and school environment. That’s it. And if you’re not getting support at home, the only place to get it is at school. Having mental health support at school would be extremely useful.” Black Student

Recommendations came forward about how to adapt the current presence of police in schools. It was clear that if police were going to be present in schools that they needed to be officers with specialized training on interacting with children and youth from different backgrounds, understanding racism and its impacts on racialized communities and understanding mental health concerns. It was also clearly stated that police officers, when they are in school, should not be in uniform and should not be armed with a gun.

“If it’s a school, police officers shouldn’t be armed. Students don’t have guns and police do not need guns or tasers.” Black Student

While perceptions and experiences varied across the table, the significant experiences with anti-Black racism and the fear and concern identified by some Black students and community members signal that significant change to OCDSB practices of involving police in school is needed. Survey results confirm this perspective with a significant proportion of Black survey respondents indicating concerns about the impact of police presence in their schools including 48% who said it made them uncomfortable to attend school. There was also a substantial call for non-police responses to many behaviours.

Table 15: Impact of police involvement based on perceptions of Black survey respondents

Impact	Agreed or Disagreed	Unsure
Makes school a safer place	62% disagreed	11%
Make me feel watched or target	56% agreed	11%
Make me feel less worried about problems like bullying, drugs, weapons, vandalism, etc.	57% disagreed	8%
Makes me more comfortable with police,	63% disagreed	6%
Makes me uncomfortable to attend school	48% agreed	9%
Makes me feel safer in the neighbourhood	55% disagreed	9%
Makes me feel intimidated	54% agreed	14%

Makes me feel like their school has a bad reputation	52% agreed	13%
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Table 16: Percentage of Black respondents who *do not agree*⁹⁸ with having police involved in specific activities or see police involvement as a last resort

Type of Activity	Disagree	Only as a last resort	Prefer this be handled by non-police
Relationship building with students and families	38%	6%	26%
Share information about criminal justice process	15%	7%	25%
Presentations on the law and safety	18%	4%	16%
Lockdown drills	22%	5%	19%
Respond to fighting	41%	17%	17%
Respond to trespass	31%	16%	19%
Respond to bullying	37%	12%	24%
Respond to out of control behaviour	27%	11%	24%
Support victims of sexual assault	18%	8%	22%
Support victims of crime	19%	9%	21%

⁹⁸ Includes respondents who selected strongly disagree, disagree, not sure, only as a last resort or who prefer it to be handled by non-police

Appendix 8 - Perspectives shared by the Somali Community

A discussion group was held in Somali language to better understand perspectives within the Somali community on police involvement in school. Perspectives of people who identified themselves as a Somali community member in other discussions are also included. The survey did not collect information about ethnicity so survey information was not used to inform this summary. Significant concerns about racism in both the education and policing system were raised, as were concerns about the over policing of Somali children resulting in their criminalization. Participants expressed that seeing police officers in schools caused their children to feel “terrified” “fear” “trauma” “unsafe”.

There was unanimous consensus that police presence in schools was detrimental to the feelings of safety for the Somali community and that police should only be brought into schools to respond to very serious issues. Participants expressed that in the Somali culture the relationship between parents and school is a partnership and built on trust. School should feel like a home. Having a police officer in the education space and responding to problems breaches that trust and destroys the feeling of peace that should come from being in a home environment. Schools should involve Somali parents more in their children’s education and reach out to them in partnership - once police are involved Somali parents will step back. There was an acknowledgement of the need for better relationships between the Ottawa Police Service and the Somali community however it was clearly stated that police presence at school and over policing of neighbourhoods with large Somali populations was not the way to achieve this aim. The following themes emerged from the discussion:

The presence of police officers in schools negatively impacts the relationship between parents, children and the school.

“The police have no place in the home or at school. There is no need to have them in the school ... School is a place of education where kids go and learn but when police are there it changes the message.” Somali Participant

“The police are a very hurtful topic for us. We don’t need extra. Police should be there when it’s bad. School should be a place of learning, Books, blackboards. Not the police.” Somali Parent

“This is the first time I have ever come to a public forum. Our kids are terrified after watching what happened to George Floyd. It terrified the kids. They saw it on TV and they all watched how he died. Basically that is what they see when they see police.” Somali Parent

The presence of police officers at schools sends the message that the school is not safe.

“When there are police in the school what the parent thinks is that everyone is telling them that the school is not safe. That is the message that you are sending out. Schools are not safe... People’s understanding of being in Canada is that it’s one of the safest countries in the world but the message you are sending is that it’s not enough” Somali Participant

Racism in the education system and racism in the police force results in worse outcomes for Somali children.

"I graduated two years ago... SROs only roamed around boy students of colour. We discussed it with the administration because we felt like we were being targeted in our own community. BIPOC feel like they are being labelled as criminals in their very own schools and this shouldn't be happening. We live in a world where people of colour are targeted by law enforcement a lot more than white folks and that's just the reality of the world that we live in today. To bring more police into schools maintains that mindset - they follow you around because of your skin colour and because you're a black boy. It's demoralizing at a certain point when you walk out of your class and the same thing happens on the street."
Somali former student

Somali children are over-policed.

"There are concerns regarding certain neighbourhoods. They are considered as tougher neighborhoods. Police presence in those neighbourhoods is very high and students who live there see police on every corner. They develop fear. Being at school should feel like home ... for learning ... peace, but they are terrified. Everywhere they go makes them feel terrified." Somali Participant

"I have seen kids as young as 6 and 7 interacting with police and teachers using police as a scare tactic is perpetuating this fear and trauma. We are doing this to people who are vulnerable and marginalized. We've seen officers who have relationships with kids in schools come into the community and then have kids punished in schools - they share information with teachers and schools and this creates harm." Somali Parent

Overexposure of Somali children to the police in the education system, leads to criminalization of Somali children.

"There was a disagreement between a teacher and a child who was new to the country. The child was arrested and sent to jail. This is not the right result. The impact on the school culture was terrible. It affected him psychologically and he dropped out of school. He went down a bad path and ended up in jail." Somali Participant

"Everytime you go to the court and someone is charged or accused of something you read in the paper "He was known to police". Parents believe that schools are providing this information to the police and this label ends up labelling them as gang affiliated and known to police and stigmatizes them as trouble kids." Somali Participant

"There is over-policing. Kids are new; don't speak the language; don't understand the culture and before you know it the kid does something both in the neighbourhood and school. We all know that certain neighbourhoods are over-policed and before you know if the child is known to the police." Somali Participant

"I grew up in Ottawa and have family and younger relatives currently in the OCDSB. For some of my relatives, I am often called upon to accompany the parents to school when there is an issue involving one of the children. On a few occasions, the school procured the help of a Somali police officer ahead of our

arrival. I am assuming the thinking being that somehow the parent would have a language barrier or could better connect with the parent. I found this really troubling. In essence, the school was making assumptions about the capabilities of the parent based on stereotypes. Relying on police officers to be interpreters or form a connection with the parent equates to obfuscating responsibility on the part of the OCDSB. This fosters a sense of criminality in the Children and normalizes interaction with police officers. Racialized persons are already under intense pressure to conform to discriminatory stereotypes, the last thing they need is for the OCDSB to reinforce this.” Family Member

The presence of police officers causes Somali children to feel unsafe.

“Who is it emotionally reassuring for in the school? It’s not for this community. We need to reimagine what safety looks like. For our communities it doesn’t protect our children; it doesn’t make us feel safe. We don’t need police officers to teach us about education and safety because they are the main reason we feel unsafe. Police need to repair the harm outside of the school, not inside the school. If it’s about trying to promote positive messages in schools you are asking these children to accept a distorted view of what police officers are like which is different to what they experience in the community. He’s [my son] been harassed and criminalized in the school even though he has no criminal record.” Somali Parent

“We keep expressing this. We’ve been asking for this for many years. We do not want police in schools! You send the message that our voices don’t matter and our children need to be surveilled. It’s such a dehumanizing process to share with our kids why people think they need to be surveilled.” Somali Parent

“When we come here and go to school the children come from war torn countries where war is still raging. The perception of police is not good. They [police] are in the neighbourhood and they are in the school and that creates anxiety and a lot of feeling for those students and they don’t feel safe in the schools or the neighbourhood because of the police ... For ones who have just arrived the fear level is much higher and having police in school will make them hate their school environment.” Somali Participant

Appendix 9 - Perspectives shared by community of people with disabilities

Small group discussions were held with parents, community members and employees to discuss the impact of policing in schools on children with disabilities. Where discussions in other groups also raised perspectives on the impact of police involvement on students with disabilities, they are also included here. Two key informant interviews focusing on this perspective also took place.

Themes that emerged from discussions included the intersection between disability and Indigeneity, race, and 2SLGBTQ+ identity and how these intersections further compound negative impacts experienced by people with disabilities as a result of police involvement in schools. An employee who works with children with disabilities noted the intersection between disability and race in the classrooms where they worked. The failure to recognize disabilities for people who are newcomers, but to instead blame behaviour on their status as immigrants was also recognized.

“There are things that Indigenous people know that could have helped these kids. Just the smell of the smudge, it makes you feel better. There are things that could be helpful to these kids that other people just don’t know. What if that could help a child calm down and not have to call the police? You just don’t know if you haven’t tried.” Indigenous Family Member

“The majority of our experiences being racialized students is that police presence around and inside schools has caused nothing but anxiety or stress. We have been targeted... It’s been hostile and stressful, not only for me going to school, but the worry that comes from me thinking about my family members who are still in school and in particular my brother. I really do fear for their lives. And it affects disabled students and especially disabled students who are racialized and disabled students who are queer.” Former Student with a Disability and Racialized

“In my own case, a lot of my issues were attributed to being from an immigrant family [even though I was born in Canada! and not having then-undiagnosed disabilities.” 2SLGBTQ+ Community Member with Disabilities

Another theme that emerged centred around lack of training and lack of resources within schools leading to the involvement of police to respond to outbursts when they happen. Administrators, teachers and many EAs lack the specialized training needed to both understand the behaviour of children with disabilities and to effectively de-escalate. The District’s perceived change in practice to move to a staff “hands off” approach, is identified as being a main driver for increased police contact for children with disabilities.

A former staff member who worked mainly with children with Autism noted:

“Kids with these disabilities can’t self-regulate and that is the problem. Speaking to the parents I would ask about what they do at home. At home parents hug the kid until they calm down. When they are not restrained, they hurt staff, they hurt other kids and they destroy property and there is no other choice but to call the police if you can’t get in touch with parents. We need to look at revisiting policies at the Board around staff contact with children. It’s a grey area open to abuse,

but there needs to be discretion between allowing staff to be hands-on or allowing staff to call police because staff can't be hands-on." Former Employee

"Police aren't trained or equipped to deal with disabled students, Almost all the folks we hear about in the news are people with mental health issues and police aren't equipped to deal with them. Police need to be removed from schools." Former Student

The characterization of stress behaviour as misbehaviour for children with disabilities was highlighted by some participants.

"A victim of bullying, my son had learning differences, impulse control and mental health issues, resulting in physical outbursts. SRO was brought in to explain that if he were an adult, his behavior would be considered assault and he would be arrested. Fear tactics like this only make matters worse when stress behavior is treated as misbehavior. Very poor use of SRO." Parent of Student with Disabilities

Concerns were raised that the use of police to respond to outbursts of behaviour by students with disabilities leads to the criminalization of students with disabilities and contributes to the school to prison pipeline.

*"...how to actually *prevent* dysregulated behaviour is communication! So often people on the outside don't see the *why*, only what's happening in the moment, and criminalize students for being in distress and not getting supports they need... there are so many people with my same diagnoses who end up being singled out for criminal charges and other disciplinary measures because they'd been failed by people who were supposed to provide them with what they need, and are expressing themselves in the only ways they have available"* 2SLGBTQ+ Community Member with Disabilities

"Often kids with Autism see the world in slightly different ways. They have behaviours that involve the police but it's because they don't have the language to communicate what they are feeling." Parent of a Student with Disabilities

"The police force was historically created to remove Indigenous people and enforce policing of Black people. It is intrinsically linked to the way we have dealt with disability over the years. 5 to 10% of the general population has a disability whereas up to 77% of the prison population has a disability. It is so intrinsically linked to how we respond, to how we treat people who don't fit the norm. If we look at it like we are going to police them and remove them when they deviate, then it is not going to create a good environment and good camaraderie and have them feel safe in school." Former Student with Disabilities

"Using the police brings the whole criminalization lens onto their behaviour when we use them to respond to dysregulated behaviour in the classroom. Other organizations have staff who go hands-on, but sometimes it doesn't even need to go there if you deal with it well." Former Employee

Concerns were also raised that using the police to respond to behaviour of children with disabilities can sometimes trigger an escalation, lead to restraints and handcuffs being used,

and ultimately result in the stigmatization and long term traumatization of the student. One participant cited the example involving a 9 year old child with Autism who was handcuffed by police when they responded to a call about his dysregulated behaviour.⁹⁹

“SROs are often in the hall. In 2015, a 9 year old child was handcuffed in their classroom by a police officer and the OPS said it was necessary because the child had Autism and it was needed.” Former Student with Disabilities

“Police got very physical very fast. Police did not listen to parents at all in terms of suggestions as to how to interact with their child. Police had attitude of power and control and used intimidation tactics instead of de-escalation tactics” Survey Respondent

Several examples of hands-on restraint used by police officers when they were called to respond to dysregulated behaviour of students with disabilities were shared, as were examples of patient de-escalation by both SROs and regular patrol officers.

One parent of a child with disabilities raised concerns about the lack of communication between the school and parents about police involvement. The concern highlighted the larger problem of police presence alone triggering negative feelings in some children and in fact putting their safety at risk. Their child had a significant history of trauma involving the police removing them from their home and was triggered by sight of the police. The parent requested numerous times to be informed in advance if the police would be at the school, but the administration was not willing to accommodate the request. One day, the child inadvertently saw the police officer in the hallway while he was on his way back from the bathroom and ran away.

“The school called me and said that they can’t find my son. I panicked and went to the school and we were looking everywhere. He was on a path hiding and he told me that the police came to the school to get him.” Parent of a Student with Disabilities

Another person shared the long-term trauma that resulted from an incident involving police and their young family member:

“He was in grade 5 and had some pretty severe depression and impulsive ADHD so he would blurt things out. He uttered a threat against a teacher. The teacher didn’t change their behaviour and he did it again. They called the police to respond to the office. It’s what the school needed, but this isn’t what the child needed. Was this the administrator reacting because of policy or because of fear of litigation or to scare him into behaving? When you have someone with mental health struggles, the second person to call shouldn’t be the police. He’ll never forget that – never forget having police called on him because he’s so sensitive – it had a negative impact on him – he thinks he’s a bad kid.” Indigenous Family Member of Student with Disabilities

The institutionalization of the police response to respond to the behaviour of students with disabilities, through the incorporation of a police response into the student’s written safety plan was identified as a significant concern.

“Police involvement is written into safety plans and have become a necessary step as part of the safety plan - are we failing our students by having things escalate because our overall planning for these students aren’t sufficient. Safety plan institutionalized police response. There don’t seem to be a lot of steps before that.” Employee

Recommendations heard centred around increasing mental health supports and having dedicated mental health professionals to help kids and prevent issues from escalating to the point that police are involved. Someone with experience and qualifications. Someone who can work on mental health relationship building.

“A mental health professional is needed to help kids before the next thing and the next thing and the next thing. Let’s help them before they build up all that scar tissue that makes them harder to help down the road ... Hopefully if they do start helping these children with mental health relationship building the need for calling the police will go away.” Former Employee

“Disabled students don’t need relationships with cops, they need actual resources to thrive.” 2SLGBTQ+ Community Member with Disabilities

The need for more EAs who are properly trained and can invest time in building relationships with kids was also emphasized by participants.

“Every year they [schools] have to go begging for an EA based on their special education needs ... EAs could do so much to alleviate a situation of a kid having a bad day if they had the time and this would help to reduce police involvement.” Employee

Not all perspectives heard were negative. The same parent whose child was triggered on sight of the police and went missing, praised the patience and engagement of a subsequent SRO who, with the parent’s permission, spent time slowly building trust with her child, to the point where the SRO was able to de-escalate the child after they were the impetus for a lockdown at their school.

An employee who previously worked with youth in prison noted the high rate of youth with intellectual challenges in prison and noted the need to help them understand their rights, obligations and the law, while they are in school to help them make better choices and avoid prison. The employee saw the role of the SRO in this area as beneficial, but indicated it did not necessarily need to be a police officer performing that function but it was beneficial to have it be someone external.

A parent came forward to share the positive experience their child had accessing a diversion program and community support through the SRO.

“The SRO was instrumental in getting my child into the diversion program. If we had a police officer come in who didn’t have a relationship with him, there would have been a much different result. The SRO advocated on behalf of my child and got him a lot of other services. He had bullying behaviour and it has been life changing for him. If it had been a patrol officer it wouldn’t have been dealt with in the same manner.” Parent of a Student with Disabilities

Employees also recognized the important role police play in ensuring staff safety when incidents of dysregulated behaviour arise, but other employees are starting to question whether a police response is the best answer.

Recalling an occasion where a patrol officer was called to respond to the dysregulated behaviour of a 12 year old racialized boy in special program class, the Administrator reflected on the long term stigma it caused to the child and noted that it has caused her to question whether police are the right response:

“Although the students were often dysregulated they were still young children. One particular day a student had a very bad day, was dysregulated and was being quite destructive - none of his trusted teachers or admin were able to calm him. The police were called, unfortunately our regular SRO was not available. This particular student was 12, a bigger student and of colour. The police officer took the child out of the school, quite forcefully with hands behind his back, pushing him through the halls and the door.

Now as a school we were able to keep the majority of the students away from windows, but of course they knew what was happening. Staff also knew what was happening. The stigma that this had on the child was a big one - teachers and students were wary of him and stayed away.

Teachers also commented on the use of force the police officer used, some thought it was ok to give him a shove as the student was not listening, most were disgusted that this happened. I know that the student was acting in an unsafe way, but I have often reflected on whether the police were the right people to deal with this child. It also raises the question about who we should be using if our SRO is not available - relationships are so very important when dealing with students.” Administrator

Results from the survey of students, parents and community members who identified themselves as having disabilities signaled significant reservations about whether police presence improves safety and almost 40% said they felt watched or targeted or intimidated. There was also substantial opposition to the idea of police engagement in non-mandatory areas as described in the tables below.

Table 17: Impact of police involvement based on perceptions of survey respondents with Disabilities

Impact	Agreed or Disagreed	Unsure
Makes school a safer place	48% disagreed	11%
Make them feel watched or target	38% agreed	15%
Make them feel less worried about problems like bullying, drugs, weapons, vandalism, etc.	51% disagreed	11%
Makes them more comfortable with police,	48% disagreed	12%

Makes them uncomfortable to attend school	40% agreed	12%
Makes them feel safer in the neighbourhood	45% disagreed	14%
Makes them feel like their school has a bad reputation	34% agreed	15%

Table 18: Percentage of respondents with Disabilities who *do not agree*¹⁰⁰ with having police involved in specific activities or see police involvement as a last resort

Type of Activity	Respondents with Disabilities
Relationship building with students and families	57%
Share information about criminal justice process	43%
Presentations on safety and the law	39%
Lockdown drills	49%
Respond to fighting	70%
Respond to trespass	61%
Respond to bullying	75%
Respond to out of control behaviour	65%
Support victims of sexual assault	49%
Support victims of crime	48%

¹⁰⁰ Includes respondents who selected strongly disagree, disagree, not sure, only as a last resort or who prefer it to be handled by non-police

Appendix 10 - Perspectives shared by 2SLGBTQ+ community

Small groups discussions were held with 2SLGBTQ+ students, families, community members and employees in addition to key informant interviews and written submissions received.

Discussions with people who identify as 2SLGBTQ+ revealed a range of perspectives, many of which were rooted in the historic and current day oppression of marginalized people. Intersectionality between 2SLGBTQ+ identity and Indigeneity, race and disability came through in the conversations and in particular how those intersections in identity can impact on lived experiences. Conversations highlighted the deep divide within the 2SLGBTQ+ community in relation to the police because of the historic criminalization and targeting of people in the 2SLGBTQ+ community and recognized how that continues to impact today.

“The policing system has a long history of systemic racism and brutality against minorities. I don’t feel comfortable in an environment where police involvement is mandatory or encouraged. Personally, I have witnessed and experienced police using their powers against students and vulnerable populations. The OCDSB must decide if their focus is on the protection and safety of students; or on the side of oppressive regimes.” 2SLGBTQ+ Participant

“There is a well documented history of queer and gender non-conforming people experiencing greater harassment and targeting by police. In our communities, we know this and have experienced it. We are very concerned for our kids' safety out in the world and about the way their identities, gender expressions, and family are seen in a heteronormative society. For us, safety does not come from policing, which is an institution that is designed to protect only the privileged.” 2SLGBTQ+ Parents

Participants noted and questioned the link between high police presence in some schools and people’s identity.

“There is no place and no good rationale for police in our Schools. The reason our school is singled out and stigmatised in this way is due to racist, classist and ableist assumptions about our kids. I don’t see cops in schools with mostly rich white kids.” 2SLGBTQ+ Participant

Many participants questioned the use of police in schools to respond to children’s behaviour, noting that it can lead to criminalization and that a non-police response that centres well-being and mental and psychological support would be more appropriate.

“Police involvement can cause traumatized/distressed children to shut down. At times they’ll just agree to whatever they need to in order for things to “return to normal”. Even in cases of bullying by young children, odds are their home lives suck and they need emotional/psychological support, not to be labeled as a “trouble maker” or criminal at such a young age; that’s setting them up for failure.” 2SLGBTQ+ Participant

“Police make racialized and queer/ trans students less safe in general and there are other more appropriate services to use.” 2SLGBTQ+ Participant

“Police do not belong in schools. Inviting/allowing them increases criminalization of youth, particularly racialized, mentally ill, disabled, LGBTQ2+, immigrant, poor and otherwise minority students, families and staff. Get them out before they do even more harm. They do not have the skills required to deal with any of the situations you have listed in this survey and should absolutely not be your go-to for anything short of terrorism.” 2SLGBTQ+ Participant

“They harass us, people have been surprised with a call for you to go to the office with zero warning or knowledge and forced to be interrogated by them, they instantly treat you like a criminal, threaten and accuse you of things you've heard absolutely nothing about.” 2SLGBTQ+ Student

“In all of my time speaking to others about their experiences with police in schools, I have never heard a positive experience. Often, police in schools lead to increased fear, poor self-esteem, anxiety and trauma, and in some cases, a record of police involvement that haunts them for the rest of their lives. We need compassion and empathy for those with complex needs, and police do not provide that service. Social workers and other community advocates would be a far better choice.” 2SLGBTQ+ Participant

“Vulnerable groups include people with learning differences and with a lot of students who are neurodivergent go into melt downs. I've been there when people smash windows and run out of class screaming and threatening to hurt people. In many of them, involving police could become more threatening for students. I hope police have training for dealing with marginalized groups and dealing with people with different needs but mental health professionals are what we need.” 2SLGBTQ+ Student

“I have worked directly with police in schools. I know their intentions are typically good. However, they do not have the training that youth workers do. Why are we engaging police rather than trained supports? What message are we sending to students that this is our go-to? For students who have disabilities and are racialized, a police presence can be incredibly scary.” 2SLGBTQ+ Participant

“There is a bittersweet relationship with having police in schools. Space where it is essential and space where it hasn't worked out in the student's favor. There is an expectation that police have a lot of training that they don't have and they end up being called into situations that they don't have the experience or training to do.” 2SLGBTQ+ Employee

2SLGBTQ+ students and families came forward to share their concerns about discrimination that their children experience in the school system. One parent spoke of the fear of their child being bullied for being from a 2SLGBTQ+ family and the comfort that knowing an SRO was available to respond brought. Another family shared the experience of their non-binary child being bullied at school and their satisfaction with how the administrator responded to the situation and their relief that the SRO had not been involved. They went on to say:

“We would never have wanted anyone in school to resort to police when either of our children were being bullied, nor when our youngest was experiencing homophobic bullying. Our children feel the same way - when filling out your survey, our oldest said that it makes them nervous when the police come to do

fire or safety drills, and that they strongly disagree with having police in schools. They said that schools should have more social workers, mental health and harm reduction supports instead.” 2SLGBTQ+ Parents

A young trans student shared their experience of being a victim of bullying in primary school because they were trans. At that time, the student wasn't ready to come out to many people, but they had trusted the other child and come out. When the bullying got out of control, the school called the SRO. When the SRO responded the child wasn't ready to be out and reveal their identity to the police officer, but the other child did anyway. The SRO reportedly blamed the victim and threatened to arrest them.

“I really think that police shouldn't be so involved with schools. They only should be involved when something really bad is happening. Another time I was being bullied by a guy who knew I was bi and trans. When the bullying got out of hand the school called the SRO... I wasn't ready to come out to anyone ... they threatened to arrest me, and I was only in Grade 5! And that was terrifying.: 2SLGBTQ+ Student

The use of SROs and police to support survivors of sexual assault and to educate and respond on matters related to sexual and gender-based violence was questioned. The mandatory requirement for a school to notify the police in situations involving sexual assault was raised as a concern by some. These people advocated for a survivor-led practice that centred survivor consent.

“The fact that sexual assault survivors can be threatened with police involvement when speaking out about their experiences or asking for safety is a testament to how committed the education system is to surveilling and infringing. I don't believe it is necessary to have police in schools. It disproportionately affects BIPOC students.” 2SLGBTQ+ Participant

A former student shared their experience of how victim blaming rhetoric had significant impacts on the trajectory of her life.

A former student described the lasting, harmful impact that a school-wide assembly delivered by the SRO on child pornography had on them.

“The SRO told us that when girls take nudes for their boyfriends they are risking criminal charges. We were taught that in these cases girls have not only produced child pornography, they have also distributed it. They told everyone that the boys will share it with their friends. And when this happens not only will girls have to face the shame of pictures being online for all to see but also legal repercussions. This talk was to discourage teenage girls from taking and sending nude pictures. I have spoken with high school peers and hardly any of the boys remember this speech. Each and every one of my girlfriends remember it clearly. It relied on rape culture narratives that blame the victims of revenge porn and mislabel them as the perpetrators and sexual offenders.” 2SLGBTQ+ Former Student

They went on to describe the devastating impact:

“So what did I do when my word spread that my first boyfriend shared my nude pictures with his friends after I broke up with him? I cried for hours and told NO adult. Not one teacher, parent or police officer because I feared I would be arrested. I blamed myself. I called myself a whore. I believed it when people called me a slut. I became very depressed and started using drugs and alcohol to mask my pain and deal with my shame... And that is exactly what my SRO upheld in that assembly. It was one of the main experiences that taught me to blame myself. I never saw that SRO or any cop for that matter, as someone I could go to about these events. I expected them to reinforce the ideas they had already solidified in my mind. I broke the law by taking a nude picture as a minor. It was my fault. I deserved this. I broke the law by drinking under age and using drugs. It was my fault. I deserved this.” 2SLGBTQ+ Former Student

Some people came forward to share the perspective that having police in schools was important so that it could help *other* people become more comfortable with the police.

“Exposure to non-enforcement, proactive contact creates trust and works to educate and diminish barriers between devalued voices and police.” 2SLGBTQ+ Participant

“Racial used and marginalized communities often have an “all police are bad” mentality. The only way to repair this relationship is to have police presence in schools so children in those communities learn that police are not all bad and to normalize their presence.” 2SLGBTQ+ Participant

But others spoke of individual, personal feelings of discomfort and fear as a result of having police in schools and shared observations about negative impacts on marginalized communities.

“Police officers in full uniform and guns is terrifying” 2SLGBTQ+ Student

“I am extremely uncomfortable around police officers, as are most students I know. They make me feel unsafe in my own school more than any student ever has.” 2SLGBTQ+ Student

“As the parent of a trans/ nonbinary child I am profoundly aware of their vulnerability to policing, and feel strongly that there are many communities who are not served by the presence of police in schools, including racialized, immigrant and LGBTQ2S+ students and families.” 2SLGBTQ+ Parent

“School is no longer a safe and comfortable environment when there is constant policing. It makes students feel unwelcome and unheard. With all the attention violence and policing is getting, I think the school should recognize how policing impacts...” 2SLGBTQ+ Participant

“Social worker or legal advisor would be able to provide the same support to victims and help with check ins etc. and taking care of the needs of students in a way that a police officer with a gun who can threaten you or criminalize you.” 2SLGBTQ+ Participant

“The SROs are very overwhelmed with 1 police officer to 15 schools - if you're just showing up when things are going south you are not building relationships.” 2SLGBTQ+ Employee

“Super triggering for students when they see the cruisers out front - you can see the change in their behaviour when they see police. Many have a history of police involvement either themselves or their family and it doesn't matter their race or how they identify or their socioeconomic status. If you have a negative experience that is what is being drawn up and it's very dysregulating for them.” 2SLGBTQ+ Employee

There was significant agreement that the role of police in schools needs to be limited to when it is a last resort and that non-police responses were preferred for many types of discretionary incidents. This was reflected in the survey responses.

“Police officers shouldn't be involved with students at school unless they are called for an emergency. It is unnecessary for officers to be stationed at each school on a regular basis. Many students may feel intimidated/afraid and it may interfere with their ability to learn. Students should feel safe in their school, and involving the police would have the opposite effect. It makes students feel as though their school is unsafe to the point where it needs protection. It does more harm than good.” 2SLGBTQ+ Participant

Table 19: Impact of police involvement based on perceptions of survey respondents with Disabilities

Impact	Agreed or Disagreed	Unsure
Makes school a safer place	68% disagreed	8%
Make me feel watched or target	54% agreed	14%
Make me feel less worried about problems like bullying, drugs, weapons, vandalism, etc	68% disagreed	6%
Makes me more comfortable with police	70% disagreed	10%
Makes me feel uncomfortable to attend school	39% agreed	13%
Makes me feel safer in the neighbourhood	65% disagreed	11%
Makes me feel intimidated at school	64% agreed	5%
Makes me feel like my school has a bad reputation	39% agreed	13%

Table 20: Percentage of 2SLGBTQ+ respondents who *do not agree*¹⁰¹ with having police involved in specific activities or see police involvement as a last resort

Type of Activity	Disagree	Only as a last resort	Prefer this be handled by

¹⁰¹ Includes respondents who selected strongly disagree, disagree, not sure, only as a last resort or who prefer it to be handled by non-police

			non-police
Relationship building with students and families	30%	4%	40%
Share information about criminal justice process	10%	2%	39%
Presentations on the law and safety	16%	4%	37%
Lockdown drills	14%	10%	27%
Respond to fighting	26%	22%	35%
Respond to trespass	16%	28%	27%
Respond to bullying	24%	14%	42%
Respond to out of control behaviour	17%	20%	37%
Support victims of sexual assault	13%	12%	34%
Support victims of crime	11%	13%	30%

Appendix 11 - Perspectives shared by Gloucester and Ridgemont catchment areas

Focus: Priority SRO officers at Ridgemont and Gloucester as per MOU

Human rights-based report. For this particular part of the review, small group discussions were held with students from Gloucester and Ridgemont High Schools as well as parents, caregivers and community members. Small group discussions were also held with SROs including SROs who have or continue to serve GHS and RHS and elementary schools in their catchment area. Additionally, as part of the wider review, small group discussions were held with students; parents, caregivers and community members; and employees who identify as Indigenous, Black, racialized, 2SLGBTQ+ and living with a disability. Additionally small group discussions were held in Somali language for the Somali community and in Arabic language for the Arabic-speaking community. Where reference was made in these discussions to being from the Urban Priority SRO Program Schools, these perspectives were also taken into account as part of this focused report.

Key informant interviews were conducted with a number of employees, students, parents and community members. A summary of these engagements can be found in Annex A.

Background to SRO involvement at GHS and RHS. Beginning in or around 2010, reportedly as a result of recommendations made by committees of community members and the administration from both Rideau High School and Ridgemont High School, some of the funding from the UPHS program was used to establish two full-time SROs at both these schools. The two SROs also provide support to the seven elementary schools in their catchment area¹⁰². The OCDSB entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)¹⁰³ with the OPS to outline the terms of the arrangement. This is a ratio of approximately one SRO for every 4.5 schools. Approximately \$95,000 per year is contributed by the OCDSB towards the salary of one of these SROs. Mid-way through 2013, the OCDSB started funding this extra police presence directly rather than through the UPHS funding. The remaining 23 SROs in the Ottawa SRO program are paid for by the OPS.

The objectives of the MOU include enhancing safety for students and staff¹⁰⁴ and strengthening the partnership between OPS and the OCDSB¹⁰⁵.

The MOU justifies the extra police presence on the basis that these schools have a *higher level of need*.¹⁰⁶ There is no indication in the MOU as to what criteria was used to determine the “higher level of need”. However under the MOE Urban and Priority High Schools Program, need is determined by considering criteria such as the following:

- Rate of credit accumulation of students at the end of grades 9 and 10 and other student achievement data
- Prevalence of youth crime in the community

¹⁰² Emily Carr Middle School, Queen Elizabeth Public School, Henry Munro Middle School and York Street Public School are the elementary schools in Gloucester High School’s catchment area. Featherston Drive Public School, Roberta Bondar Public School and Sawmill Creek Elementary School are in the Ridgemont High School catchment area.

¹⁰³ Urban Priorities Schools Program, Memorandum of Understanding between the Ottawa Police Services and Ottawa-Carleton District School Board hereinafter “Urban Priorities MOU”.

¹⁰⁴ Memorandum of Understanding between Ottawa Police Service and Ottawa Carleton District School Board at para. 1.2 [hereinafter MOU].

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid* at para. 1.4

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid* at para. 1.4

- Rates of student absenteeism
- Local poverty statistics
- Number and type of violent incidents in the school
- Number of expulsions; and/or rate of recidivism
- Rate of school staff turnover
- Youth crime statistics by type of incident and gender/age
- Percentage of parents with low educational attainment

It is relevant and important to note that collectively GHS and RHS and schools in their catchment area have a significantly larger Indigenous, Black, Middle Eastern, Arabic-speaking, Somali-speaking, Muslim and refugee students compared to the rest of the District. The following table compares the demographics of the Urban Priority SRO Program Schools to the OCDSB school population as a whole¹⁰⁷:

Table 21: Demographics of Urban Priority SRO Program Schools Compared to OCDSB Population

Student Demographics	Urban Priority SRO Program Schools	OCDSB Wide
Indigenous	6.5%	3.5%
Black	19.4%	8.6%
Middle Eastern	31.5%	14.7%
First Language Arabic	25%	9.3%
First Language Somali	4.9%	1.1%
Muslim	45.1%	19.3%
Refugee	9.8%	5.8%
Disability	7.3%	9.0%

The demographics of these schools is relevant because the review of the SRO presence is a human rights-based review. This means that the impact of the program on the minoritized student population is of particular importance. This includes its impact on the schools' Indigenous, Black, racialized students as well as students who identify as 2SLGBTQ+ and with a disability.

The Role of the SRO: The role of the SRO is not clearly defined in OCDSB's policies or procedures. The MOU says it is the SRO's duty to:

- Work cooperatively with school administrators, staff, students, parents and the community to proactively identify and address school concerns or problems relating to the school safety;

¹⁰⁷ Information extrapolated from "Identity Matters! 2019-2020 OCDSB Student Survey Results", Ottawa-Carleton District School Board as well as voluntary Indigenous self-identification information.

- Be a visible presence in the school and the community through:
 - referrals to community services;
 - structured class presentations, lectures and distributing educational resource; materials related to school safety;
 - continual interaction; and
 - mentoring
- Conduct investigations and enforce applicable law and statutes; and
- Employ problem-solving initiatives to address issues in schools relating to school safety.

The MOU goes on to note that the SROs are *not* in the school for the primary function of providing school security, but rather their function includes both proactive and reactive police investigative services.¹⁰⁸ This is consistent with the description of the SRO program on the OPS website.¹⁰⁹

Activities SROs Engage in at Urban Priority SRO Program Schools: As part of the review, students, parents and guardians, community members, staff members and the SROs themselves were asked to share information about the types of activities that they are involved in at the schools they serve. The following examples of activities were identified.

Visible Presence Outside School: Feedback from students, parents, staff and community members at Gloucester and Ridgemont High Schools confirmed a highly visible police presence outside both schools. SROs park their vehicles in parking spaces in front of the school and sit inside their vehicles at the busiest time of day, observing students and their families coming and going. At times the SRO will park the vehicle at the front doors of the school, not in a parking place.

The regular visibility of the police vehicle in front of the school caused considerable concern for many of the people who participated in the consultations. There were significant concerns raised about the stigma the visible police presence has on the reputation of the school. There were concerns raised about the surveillance and information being gathered. There were also significant concerns raised that the visibility of the police vehicle reinforces negative stereotypes and perceptions about the Indigenous, Black and racialized population that attends the school and lives in the neighbourhood. These are discussed in more detail under the “Impacts” section below.

“Police cars sitting outside of the school. They are almost always there.”
Indigenous student

“Why do they park their car in front of the school in a NO PARKING ZONE?”
Somali participant

“You allow SROs to park in front of the school in the no parking zone. Asserting their power.” Racialized participant

“Having a police car parked out front continues a reputation that you cannot outrun.” Employee

¹⁰⁸ Urban Priorities MOU supra note 6 at para.

¹⁰⁹ See

<https://www.ottawapolice.ca/en/safety-and-crime-prevention/School-Resource-Officer-Program.aspx>
accessed on April 26, 2021

Information Sharing: One type of information sharing that takes place is the sharing of photographs by the SRO with school staff for identification purposes. This happens several times each year and typically involves the image of a youth who is suspected to have been involved in a serious crime in the neighbourhood and that crime may or may not have a link to the school climate. Other information sharing reported, includes the sharing of information to support better outcomes for victims of crime.

At times the information shared crosses the threshold of what is permissible and highlights the blurred lines of responsibility that are created by the close administrator/SRO relationship. In a particularly concerning incident the school identified a student for something that was not a crime and did not involve something that occurred on the school property. It resulted in a homeless, racialized student being targeted for having provided a false name to the police when they were found to be loitering inside a public shopping area to get warm. This is an example of how information sharing between the OCDSB and the OPS can place students onto the radar of police and result in them being exposed to the criminal justice process for incidents that do not impact on the school climate.

*“Everytime you go to the court and someone is charged or accused of something you read in the paper “He was known to the police”. Parents believe that schools are providing this information to the police and this label ends up labelling them as gang affiliated and known to police and stigmatizes them as trouble kids.”
Somali community member*

Talking to Students Inside School: The proactive role of the SRO inside the school engaging in relationship-building is not clearly evident. There are rare examples of visible police presence inside the schools noted by students. These include police officers being seen in the hallway or chatting with students in the lobby. Only two students noted this and one student noted they had never seen a police officer inside their high school at all.

“I remember having an officer in the lobby just talking to students and trying to get along with them. I think building that relationship was a good thing.” White student

“I have not seen police talking with students at Ridgemont. I feel like they are watching us.” Black student

Some administrators at schools with high SRO presence noted that they ended the practice of having police walk in the hallways approximately one year ago because they did not see the need for it. However the SRO still pops in regularly to check in with the administration and will spend some time in the foyer talking casually with students. It is reported that large groups of students will gather around the SRO for these casual chats. At the other school the SRO will sometimes go to the lunch area and casually talk with students. Reportedly large numbers of students will gather around for the conversation. In both of these situations, the students are self-selecting whether they want to engage with the SROs.

In another example, an employee noted that SROs pop into specialized program classrooms to speak with students with disabilities because the students reportedly enjoy interacting with first-responders. However, overall the information shared in the consultations indicates that significant two-way relationship building is not going on between SROs and students.

Presentations to Students: Giving presentations is another way that SROs engage at school. Examples include SROs giving presentations to law classes, to newcomers and at elementary school about internet safety. One student reported the SRO giving a presentation recently to their law class and indicated that this is also being done in the elementary schools that feed into their high school. This is consistent with information shared by staff indicating that SROs are invited to present in classrooms from time to time.

“I met with a police officer recently at school in a law class. Most students are of colour and felt awkward with the police officer. She goes to all schools in our area including feeder schools. She talks about how nobody ever talks to her. She is trying hard but students are wary.” Black student

However, a number of participants in the parent, community member and employee sessions indicated concern about this practice and expressed a preference to have educational information in classrooms shared by stakeholders other than police.

“Police teaching youth the pathways to their career isn’t a relevant reason to be in schools. Even when there is a violent conflict in the school, why is an enforcement approach being prioritized, when there are other ways that don’t criminalize youth, especially racialized people who are being impacted by this.” Racialized parent

“There’s nothing beneficial about police officers with guns coming into classrooms. It’s a privilege for them to be in that space. Not a right.” Racialized parent

“We don’t need police officers to teach us about education and safety because they are the main reason we feel unsafe.” Somali parent

“When I hear that SROs are also going to the elementary feeder schools it makes me more alarmed. This means it’s going to the JK level and it’s setting up the expectation with BIPOC students that we are surveilling them and getting involved in their lives.” Employee

Traffic and personal safety: Supporting traffic and personal safety in and around the school was an activity valued by a parent at the consultation and in a written submission by another parent.

“We require Police School Officers onsite in both schools, for everyone’s security, safety and sense of well-being. SRO’s provide imperative support to our school communities, students, parents, and administrators, as they deal with incidents that occur when students are on their way to school or on their way home, they offer counseling, mediation, provide law and safety lectures, provide guidance on school issues and they play a key preventative role in transgressions just by their very presence ... The idea of not having an SRO greatly concerns me, as well as countless other parents. I know for a fact that Ridgemont students have become very familiar with the SRO’s and it has had a very positive effect in the school environment.” Racialized parent

“My daughter will start Ridgemont next year and safety is a big issue. We are constantly raising issues about traffic safety on Alta Vista Drive. It will be handy to have police at Ridgemont for continuity. “She [my daughter] also fears for her

safety generally. For our family, the decision to attend Ridgemont was difficult because of Ridgemont's reputation. We talked to teachers and students and decided to attend because SRO is in the school." Parent

However, other parents questioned the validity of having police undertake this function at the expense of racialized children who feel unsafe around police and advocated instead for more qualified mental health support.

"It's interesting how certain parents want cops with guns to console/comfort their children instead of advocating for actual mental health professionals. You are worried about the safety of your children but disregard the fact that our children are seen as unsafe around cops. So pretty much we have cops with guns to do things other people can do." Racialized parent

"Supporting an anxious child, keeping children safe from traffic - all of these roles are jobs people who are not SROs can do. Those are not good reasons to support them in schools. Why do the schools not get more guidance counsellors instead?" Racialized parent

The fundamental assumption that these schools require extra policing in order to maintain a safe environment is not supported by most of the administrators at school. It is also not supported by the violent incident report data. These data sets do not demonstrate any significant differences in the rates of violent incidents or suspensions in these schools when compared to schools in the rest of OCDSB.

One employee commented:

"Ridgemont is the school I've worked at with the least number of kids engaged in behaviour that requires administrator interference... It's baffling to me that at some point someone thought they needed more police." Employee

Response plan for a student with disabilities: One benefit valued by an administrator was the care an SRO put into developing helpful information to guide police response for a non-verbal student with disabilities who was known to run away from school from time to time. Taking the time to attach information to the student's name in the police system would ensure that patrol officers who responded to the student were able to effectively support the student.

However, in other discussions staff members, including educators and staff responsible for supporting student well-being not just at GHS and RHS but in schools across the District, expressed considerable concern over the institutionalized use of police to respond to dysregulated behaviour expressed by children with disabilities.

Responding to incidents: Response by SROs to incidents within the school was also noted as action undertaken by SROs. However, serious emergencies were often responded to by patrol police because of their urgent nature. In general, students, parents, community members and employees acknowledged the appropriateness of having police respond to serious, mandatory incidents. However, significant concerns were expressed by a number of participants about the overuse of police in responding to non-mandatory incidents involving racialized students and students with disabilities.

“A key concern that I find is that police are called to discipline “problem students” more than they are to respond to serious criminal concerns in the schools. Unfortunately labelling “problem students” comes with many biases from administration or teachers. Also, the use of police to discipline students when the school feels they can’t, often traumatizes students and therefore is not in the student’s best interest.” Somali community member

It was acknowledged by employees that, at times, having a police officer on hand when responding to an incident can lead to an unintended, negative impact because police officers may become involved in incidents that do not warrant a police response, at times escalating the situation.

Lockdown: Lockdown was recognized as a time that SROs have been seen in the school and as an area of acceptable police involvement for some participants.

“Lockdowns and secure schools are ok. But to allow them to target students because of color is sad and it is definitely something that needs to be changed.”
Somali parent

Support for victims of crime. Administrators at both schools valued the support that SROs have provided to students who had intimate images posted on the internet without their consent. In particular, the administrators highly valued the ability of the SROs to use their computer to remove the images from the internet.

However, in other forums, not directly related to GHS and RHS, concerns were raised about the interactions that SROs have had with victims of these crimes. While the removal of the images was appreciated, there were reports of SROs being insensitive to the well-being of the student and engaging in victim-blaming.

Administrators also placed value on the support SROs provided to help students report or address incidents of sexual assault, relationship-based violence and an instance of suspected human trafficking. Value was placed on the ability of the SRO to engage with both the student and their families and provide necessary guidance and support. However, similar concerns were raised by participants and in written format about SRO responses to support victims of sexual assault in general.

“School administrators use SROs to bully students and intimidate/threaten them. Hmmm if police are supposed to deal with issues of sexual assault, how come students have come forward saying that when they confided in their SRO, the officer did nothing? And instead asked “what she was wearing” and if she did anything to cause it???!?” Participant

Police officers being used to scare children: There were several concerns raised about SROs being used as part of progressive discipline to scare children.

“My experience with SROs, I can’t think of one that was positive ... I remember this one specific case where I was helping a newcomer student ... There was a disagreement with a group of girls and the SRO just happened to be visiting the schools. I saw the girl crying and asked her why she was crying. She said that the principal told her that the SRO was here for her for the fight that happened earlier ... the principal said that the SRO just happened to be there, so they were

using the SRO to scare her a little bit. I hear a lot from people I work with and students who say they have had very bad experiences.” Employee

“There is no benefit by scaring kids at school, neither is that the place to create more trust. It only furthers the distrust.” Racialized student

“School administrators use SROs to bully students and intimidate/threaten them.” White parent

“There is no separation between what happens in the community and in school. I have seen kids as young as 6 and 7 interacting with police and teachers using police as a scare tactic is perpetuating fear and trauma. We are doing this to people who are vulnerable and marginalized.” Somali former student and parent

Police officers engaging with students in diversion programs: SRO support to students in conflict with the law was identified by two employees as an area of positive impact of the SRO program. At the time of completing this report, we were unable to speak to any students from the diversion program to confirm perspectives. Students supported under this program typically include students who engaged in a fight, theft, or assault.

The SRO was invited to meetings and reportedly forged relationships with some students. Specific impacts reported by staff from this type of engagement were:

- A small number of students trust the SRO and seek out the SRO for advice and information in relation to criminal proceedings.
- A student seeking out the SRO, through the Administrator, for help related to social media, bullying or pictures on the internet.
- A student seeking out the SRO for help to get out of a fight that is going to happen.

Impact of SRO Presence at School: Overwhelmingly, the narrative that came forward from students, parents, community members and some employees was one of harm. Police presence in school causes harm to Indigenous, Black, racialized and minoritized communities. The following summarizes the types of impact identified.

Perpetuates stigma. The presence of SROs at these Urban Priority High Schools reinforces the wrong perception that Indigenous, Black and racialized people are dangerous. It reinforces the wrong perception that Indigenous, Black and racialized people are criminals. It reinforces the intergenerational stigma that Gloucester and Ridgemont High Schools are dangerous, that the communities that surround them are dangerous and that the Indigenous Black and racialized people who live in these communities are dangerous. This has a very real and negative impact on the students who attend these schools. They are ashamed and find themselves in the position of constantly having to defend their school and their choice to attend their home school. They want to be proud of their school, but the ever present stigma surrounding the schools does not allow it. It has become so entrenched that elementary school parents are reportedly making purposeful decisions to remove their children from OCDSB and enrol them in another District to avoid sending their children here.

“...the fact that we have decided to put much needed money into funding an SRO program in Gloucester and Ridgemont, the optics of it causes people to make assumptions about what kind of school it is and what kind of kids go there and “ghettoizes” the kids... My daughter walks to Gloucester every day and on a lot of those days sees police officers in the parking lot. She is very conscious of

contact between police and Indigenous people and racialized groups. She wants to get to be a kid and not wonder why police are out there. She wants to be proud of her school.” Indigenous parent

“There are police cars in front of our school or hiding behind a restaurant. Their eyes were always on us. Lot of issues in Black community and feel like they are constantly watching us because they don’t trust us. Was driving with my mother one night and was followed by the police for a good 5 minutes before driving away.” Black student

“As a new Canadian with not much experience with police, I thought there might be crime in the school if police are present.” Newcomer student

“I heard so many bad things about Ridgemont before coming but it’s actually okay. It just goes to show how people view us.” Black student

“I heard the same [so many bad things] about Gloucester High School - people tried to get me to go somewhere else.” Indigenous student

“Half of my middle school goes to Cairine Wilson and the other half goes to Gloucester. People have a view of Gloucester High School and Ridgemont High School as not being good schools. Not true. It is frustrating.” Student

“Most of my class went to Ridgemont. Lot of them left and went to Catholic school. Their mother said Ridgemont was bad. There is a big issue at the Catholic school. People have been rude. Catholic school has lots of white people but it is still bad. People should go to the schools and see for themselves.” Black student

“The fact that there is extra SRO presence in both Ridgemont and Gloucester only reflected negatively and is an even clearer indication of the problem with this program. Whether it’s intended or not, the optics and the message is that those particular communities which are the majority in those schools need extra policing!” Somali community member

Perpetuates the feeling of being surveilled. Indigenous, Black and racialized students, parents, caregivers and community members identified that they feel targeted and surveilled by the presence of SROs at the school.

“As an Indigenous parent who has a long standing mistrust of the police and of being surveilled ... I have tried not to pass it on but intergenerational stuff happens and that never leaves her. So when she goes to Gloucester that is what she feels and that is her experience.” Indigenous parent

“We keep expressing this. We’ve been asking for this for many years. We do not want police in schools. You send the message that our voices don’t matter and our children need to be surveilled. It’s such a dehumanizing process to share with our kids why people think they need to be surveilled.” Somali parent

“... when I was at Gloucester, the argument to keep SROs was to prevent graffiti or fights. But when we talk about actually helping people in the community

everyone goes silent, no one wants to participate in that conversation. As racialized people we don't want surveillance as a part of our lives. To be watched by police officers in schools and in the community is an amount of surveillance black kids don't need." Black former student and parent

"People are being surveilled in our communities, these people who are surveilling our community are enforcing violence in our schools. This is reinforcing colonial violence. If we want to create safer spaces for everyone, we have to reimagine fundamentally how we approach conflict in our schools in general." Racialized community member

"Targeted surveillance at schools is so obvious to our children and they internalize these messages" Somali community member

Perpetuates feelings of being unsafe. When asked about the impact of having police in schools, Indigenous, Black and racialized participants widely reported feeling various negative emotions. Feelings like "terrified" "uncomfortable" "traumatized" "awkward" "threatened" "worried" "anxious" "scared" "unsafe" "fearful" came up in conversations across different groups.

"I want staff to understand where fear of police is coming from. They should give us space and become aware. If staff understood how students feel, they [wouldn't involve police] they should just be adults who want to protect students." Black student

"Our kids were terrified watching what was happening to George Floyd, and how he died. When you see the police this is what comes to mind." Somali parent

"Even if we aren't criminals there are police that will be prejudiced against us and harm people of colour like what happened with George and Brianna. I think that's why we worry when we see the police." Black student

"What is the real reason for the Board having police in schools? Police make students of colour not feel safe at school. Why have them there in the first place?" Racialized student

"They try to make students feel safe. There is a disconnect between policy and reality. Someone carrying a weapon can use it." Black student

"When a police officer makes his presence known, the atmosphere amongst the students completely shifts." Racialized student

"I know that some of my friends get really anxious and don't feel welcome at school when they see uniformed officers." Indigenous student

"Police are good for solving problems like threats inside the schools but those problems will rarely happen. When the police are just on standby, people and especially fellow people of colour, won't feel safe because of the history with police (specifically their power abuse) and massive distrust." Black student

"If you feel unsafe because of the police it will hinder your learning." Student

“I don’t want police in my school. Fights happen in all schools. Even without their uniforms or guns. Take them out so everyone can feel safe ... Other schools have teachers talking to students. Administrators should build relationships with students so they will talk to them. Police are making students feel more scared.” Indigenous student

“Police vehicles and police in uniform are traumatizing for the average black adult ... why would their presence in schools make children feel safe?” Somali community member

“I agree with everyone else. I don’t agree with having police in schools. Having police in the schools shows that schools are unsafe. That they are violent. Having police in the neighbourhood and the schools terrifies students. It puts fear into the hearts of the students. The way they walk. The way they react. I am totally against it. It is not their place. We are terrifying students.” Somali community member

“The children, when we come here and go to school, came from war torn countries where war is still raging. The perception of the police is not good. The police are in the neighbourhood and they are in the school and that creates anxiety and a lot of feelings for those students. They don’t feel safe in the schools or the neighbourhood because of the police and if the kids aren’t feeling safe, then parents aren’t feeling safe. The perception is different between newcomers and those born here. For ones who have just arrived the fear level is much higher and having police in school will make them hate their school environment.” Somali parent

Perpetuates over-policing of Indigenous, Black and racialized students. Participants in the discussions also noted that the presence of police in schools perpetuates the over-policing of Indigenous, Black and racialized people. They noted that the communities they live in are already over policed, with police watching their children from the moment they leave their home; watching them while they play ball at the park and then watching them again at school. There is no place they can go where their actions are not being policed. They referenced racial profiling in the police force and the specific targeting of Indigenous, Black and racialized populations. A member of the Somali community explained that in their culture the relationship between the home and the school is a partnership. School should feel safe, like home. But when police are brought into the space it is impossible for children to feel safe in the space and the trust and feeling of safety is lost.

“Sometimes when I see police, I wonder if they think I did something wrong. They take things to the extreme. The teacher says at least we are not in America. I feel annoyed when people say things like that. Do we really all have the same rights? We have issues in Ottawa but they don’t talk about that.” Black student

“I am also very aware of the disproportionate impact of police responses to some racialized communities and First Nations people... There is also a bias about the kids that attend [Gloucester and Ridgemont High Schools], where they live, where they come from.” Indigenous student

“Get cops out and stop telling our kids to trust cops when they’re being held at gunpoint in the community.” Racialized parent

“I am Chinese. My family members may not be targeted by SROs but they see it happen to their friends because people from different backgrounds are treated differently. It is very clear to us who gets singled out.” Racialized parent

“I have friends at Cairine Wilson and they don’t have police at their school. They don’t need one. There is a higher police presence in racialized communities. They don’t have police at schools in Russell.” White student

“There is an obvious difference [at our school compared to schools without a high police presence]. Gloucester High School and Ridgemont High School are predominantly people of colour and low income. They never give a clear answer as to why there are no police at other schools.” Black student

“There is over-policing. Kids are new; don’t speak the language; don’t understand the culture and before you know it the kids do something both in the neighbourhood and school. We all know that certain neighbourhoods are over-policed and before you know it the child is known to the police.” Somali parent

“There are concerns regarding certain neighbourhoods. They are considered as tougher neighborhoods. Police presence in those neighbourhoods is very high and students who live there see police on every corner. They develop fear. At school they should feel home, learning, peace but they are terrified. Everywhere they go makes them feel terrified.” Somali community member

Perpetuates criminalization of Indigenous, Black and racialized children. Participants in the discussions also expressed that the presence of police officers in schools perpetuates the criminalization of Indigenous, Black and racialized children. Unfortunately, the OCDSB does not collect data or analyze data on how it is involving police in schools or when the police are called to respond to incidents so it is not possible to understand a quantifiable impact within the OCDSB. The OPS provided a general breakdown of the whole SRO program at a Board meeting in December 2020 which is attached as Appendix 4.¹¹⁰ A more detailed breakdown has been requested by OCDSB. If this is provided, it will be analyzed further in the final report.

Poignantly, participants highlighted the feeling that there was no room to make mistakes and be a child. They are concerned that proximity of the police to the school means that student names become known to the police over time and mistakes that might normally be dealt with by the school end up being dealt with by the police instead, exposing the child to the criminal justice process. Some participants identified the “*school to prison pipeline*” and linked their experiences of biased and prejudiced discipline practices towards Indigenous, Black and racialized students from the moment they enter school to the ultimate criminalization of Indigenous, Black and racialized students.

“Children are being robbed of childhood, of making mistakes and the ability to learn from mistakes organically. This is necessary for cognitive development. Negative police interactions induce trauma on young minds. Further, a child

¹¹⁰ Ottawa SRO Overview presented by OPS to the OCDSB Board of Trustees on December 15, 2021 and accessed on the OCDSB Board Website on May 3, 2021
<https://pub-ocdsb.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=9027>

shouldn't be labeled "bad" so long as an officer's memory exists or employment lasts... often into adulthood. Racialized children especially need to be allowed childhood." Racialized parent

"There isn't anything at our schools going on that is so serious that it requires police to sit and patrol there 24/7. I would feel safer if me and my peers weren't being treated like we are criminals meant to mess up." Indigenous student

"When we are saying we are uncomfortable about having children enter schools that have people with guns ... My heart beats and drops and I get scared and have anxiety and think they are coming for me every single time I see the police because of the traumatic experience I have with police. I didn't develop this because I became criminalized but because I knew it in my flesh and I have seen what police officers do to people who look like me and are darker than me - even when I was 15 or 16 I felt like this." Arabic parent and former student

"When we say it is a choice to call security or the police for anything, what does that say? Administrators are using the choice to call police on kids. Criminalization is a process and it begins from daycare - from my own experience it begins there. Black bodies, racialized bodies and Indigenous bodies, especially, are seen as a threat." Arabic parent

"My son is traumatized and feels unsafe in school. He's been harassed. He's had police point guns in his face. Labelled by police as a gang member but he's never been in conflict with the law. His only crime was being Somali, Black and male." Somali parent

"There was a disagreement with a teacher for a child who was new to the country and he was arrested and sent to jail. This is not the right result. The impact on the school culture was terrible. It affected him psychologically and he dropped out of school and went down a bad path and ended up in jail. Before calling the police the school administration needs to explain why they need to have the police in schools." Somali community member

Perpetuates experiences of racial discrimination against Indigenous, Black and racialized and minoritized students. The existence of systemic racism within both the OCDSB as well as the OPS is well documented. Recent suspension and expulsion data from the OCDSB found that in the context of race, disparities were greatest for Indigenous students (3.5), followed by Middle Eastern students (2.3) and Black students (1.9), with likelihood of suspension between 2 and 3.5 times higher than other students who responded to the Valuing Voices survey.¹¹¹ A recent report¹¹² on race-based data for traffic stops by the OPS found that Middle Eastern drivers were stopped 3.18 times more than what you would expect based on their segment of the driving population while Black drivers were stopped 2.3 times more than what you would expect based on their population. Many participants in the discussions expressed concerns about inbuilt

¹¹¹ OCDSB 2019-2020 Suspension Data webpage accessed on May 3, 2021

https://ocdsb.ca/news/ocdsb_2019-2020_suspension_data

¹¹² Traffic Stop Race Data Collection Project II, Progressing Towards Bias Free Policing: Five Years of Race Data on Traffic Stops in Ottawa, November 13, 2019 accessed on May 3, 2021

<https://www.ottawapolice.ca/en/news-and-community/resources/EDI/OPS-TSRDCP-II-REPORT-Nov2019.pdf>

systematic racism and bias in the education system combined with systemic racism in the policing system resulting in over-exposure and involvement of Indigenous, Black and racialized students with the police at school.

“Police would roam around at lunch and only around the students of colour, particularly the boys. BIPOC students feel they are being labelled as criminals, we live in a world where POC are targeted by law enforcement more than white folks, to bring in officers to schools keeps that mindset that the only reason they are following you is because of your skin colour because of your actions or anything you have done in school, it is because you are a Black boy.” Somali former student

“Teachers could use the police against students if they are always in the school. Police presence should be removed.” Black student

“Even speaking Arabic is not seen well ... When BIPOC students are together it’s seen as a threat when they form a group; If Arabic kids are together in a group speaking Arabic, someone will come and tell them to stop being together. They’re viewed as a gang but when white kids are all together it’s seen as normal. It’s complex. It’s not just based on language being spoken but also based on what they say. “Ya Allah” is a normal Arabic word but white people are scared when they hear Allah. It makes many white people uncomfortable and afraid.” Arabic parent

“The perception is that the SROs are there because the students are immigrants and Black and new to the country and police and teachers are taking advantage of the children. This is what we feel as parents and as children. The administration and the police gang up on the children in those schools. Why are there more police there? The perception of the community is because they are immigrants and Black.” Somali parent

“We already know we have higher suspension and expulsion rates for and adding police presence to that dynamic only makes things more difficult for our kids who are likely to come into contact with police in their communities and neighborhoods again...further traumatizing them as mentioned.” Somali parent

“There’s absolutely no reason for police to be in schools other than to further their agenda of building trust. One they can’t even do in the community. Ottawa Police are facing all kinds of media about misconduct ... This makes me nervous for my children. How can we trust when Ottawa Police is in the news everyday? ... Ottawa Police were in the media for planting a gun and drugs. I’m afraid they will set up my son. We escaped our home country for a better life here ... if Ottawa Police cannot protect their own officers against abuse, how can we expect them to protect our children?” Somali parent

“When you combine the SROs in the schools with administrators who are racist, it is a problem”. Racialized community member

“Someone at the school can call the police for anything - especially when we already know that the police will target BIPOC - How can we feel as parents knowing that it is a choice for the school to call or not the police? We know we

live in a society where racism exists and we know being a teacher or an educator doesn't protect against racism. Who's going to choose whether it's time to call the police on a kid or not? It's going to be based on stereotypes, racial bias, perceptions and research already shows us that there is profiling racial in school and BIPOC kids are going to be the ones who are targeted. Asking the question is kind of like having the obvious answers - schools are not the space for police." Arabic parent

"It's a lie if we are telling students that they can trust the police - that is not a true thing to be teaching right now - maybe in the future but not right now." Employee

Police presence in school creates a sense of safety for some students. A small number of people came forward during the discussions to express that police presence in the school created a sense of safety for some students. Two racialized students expressed the opinion that police were there to maintain safety and security for everyone, even those who mistrust them. They also saw the value of having police in schools in case a fight happened. However, these same students were surprised to learn that not all schools had the same level of police presence as their own schools. They also questioned why someone would feel unsafe if the police were around if they were not doing something bad.

"My opinion is that police is not just a good something, but it is an important something since sometimes problems or fights may happen, and also police officers would maintain safety, and not scariness" Racialized student

"Why would someone feel unsafe and unsecure if the police are around? I think that if you are not doing something bad why should I feel uncomfortable?" Racialized student

Another student noted the benefit of having someone you can report concerns about safety to when they arise.

"I am white and feel fine with the police in the school. They are someone that they can report issues to. For example, I heard girls in the washroom who were talking about having knives." White student

However, the larger number of Indigenous, Black and racialized voices heard in this process did not support this position and instead described the creation of an environment that was unsafe, rather than safe.

"Some students may be comfortable but who are we prioritizing - the kids who are ok with it or the ones who fear everything when they see a cop? What does that say?" Arabic parent and former student

"Who is it emotionally reassuring in the school for? It's not for this community. We need to reimagine what safety looks like. For our communities it doesn't protect our children; it doesn't make us feel safe. We don't need police officers to teach us about education and safety because they are the main reason we feel unsafe. Police need to repair the harm outside of the school, not inside the school. If it's about trying to promote positive messages in schools you are asking these children to accept a distorted view of what police officers are like which is different to what they experience in the community. He's been harassed and

criminalized in the school even though he has no criminal record. We're asking people to examine white supremacy. Our children do not need to be policed or labeled by teachers." Somali parent

Recommendations. It is clear from the experiences shared by Indigenous, Black and racialized students, families and community members that the presence of SROs in school is having an adverse impact on some Indigenous, Black and racialized students. This impact is disproportionately negative on these students and it is negatively affecting their school experience. It is important to remember that the OCDSB's primary obligation is to help every student equally access their right to education, *without discrimination*. It is clear the Urban Priority SRO program is having an unintended impact on these students. This is not about the intention of the program, but rather about its impact. OCDSB's first priority must be to the wellness and educational success of its students. Centring the best interests of the Indigenous, Black and racialized students negatively impacted by this program, it is clear that changes to OCDSB practices and priorities must be made to help eliminate the barriers they are encountering and address the discrimination..

The following recommendations relate to the Urban Priority SRO Program at Gloucester and Ridgemont High Schools and their associated elementary schools.

"I also want to say that the main priority should be the reconciliation efforts that we are boasting to do, but it's different to actively work towards that in society. After all the tragedies we see in the media and the buzzwords, it's different to act on them. When we do this, it acts on Indigenous leadership and sovereignty, that should be centered in the conversation." Racialized Parent and Former Student

"I don't believe the Board will listen to me. I still wanted to come because it is really important and it matters." Indigenous Student

"I want the board to take a step back, reflect and put themselves in our shoes, maybe then they'll understand what some students feel." Black Student

Recommendation 1: That the OCDSB funding to the Urban Priority SRO Program be discontinued for 2021/2022 and the MOU not be renewed.

"The police are a very hurtful topic for us. We don't need extra. Police should be there when it's bad. School should be a place of learning, Books, blackboards. Not the police." Somali Parent

"I agree with everyone else. I don't agree with having police in schools. Having police in the schools shows that schools are unsafe. That they are violent. Having police in the neighbourhood and the schools terrifies students. It puts fear into the hearts of the students. The way they walk. The way they react. I am totally against it. It is not their place. We are terrifying students." Somali Community Member

Recommendation 2: That the funding currently allocated to the Urban Priority SRO Program be reinvested in culturally-relevant support to the student success through additional support such as mental health, counselling, community liaison support. community based workers, counsellors, or culturally responsive therapists.

"I would like to see the school board hire members of the community to be school-based safety monitors rather than police officers in uniforms placed in schools that have more racialized students" Somali Community Member

"Police aren't there to be a resource to students. We have a lot of resources that are culturally aligned and responsive to students. Bring in community resources that impact social and emotional skills and bring in more racialized mental health professionals." Somali Parent

"The resources used to hire the SRO can be used to help students have better learning experiences and fund programs that will help students especially those who are facing barriers." Employee

"The money could be going elsewhere to directly help the communities who need it the most." Racialized Parent

"I hope we are going to finally invest in things that work and divert from using police officers to do things they're not equipped to do". Racialized Parent

"I want to affirm that these funds should be re-allocated to school programs. Many youths are struggling. It is heartbreaking how many youth cannot engage in sports, arts because they can't afford it." Racialized Parent and Former Student

"Please refund it back to the students - community based workers, counsellors, culturally responsive therapists. Invest in what we know works that actually contributes to wellbeing." Racialized Community Member

"Mental health professionals, school meal programs, funding school sports, and art programs, buying textbooks that are up to date. Trauma informed physicians. Addictions counsellors." Parent

We need more BIPOC community mental health professionals that are external. OCDSB social workers or working for the school board can be harmful. Racialized Community Member

"Consult Indigenous leaders. This is our land. Traditional ways work and have worked long before colonial criminalization." Indigenous Parent

"At GHS there are a lot of kids who don't have enough money to eat or access technology or housing. That would be a better use of money." Indigenous Student

"I hope it is also clear that some perspectives ARE more important than others when this report is made because I am concerned about some of the comments shared from the other session. Students who are scared and hurt by police should be prioritized, even if some students, white students, may have good experiences sometimes. No one should be intimidated or unsafe at school. No amount of harm is acceptable." Racialized Community Member

“Part of the objective about having SROs in schools is to build good relationships with the police but he thinks that could be done by introducing programs that would make them enlightened in that field. Money used for police and policing should be used to develop civic engagement and engaging with students” Somali community member

“Money could be used in different ways to make the school an inclusive environment. Culturally sensitive mental health and addiction services, student and parent advocacy, civic engagement, homework help, hiring more racialized staff. There is some improvement in terms of teachers but not with administration. Students need to see themselves reflected in the people in charge.” Somali community member

“There is a need to have alternative programs other than policing to be part of education to increase knowledge social skills and problems solving skills” Somali community member

“Is there anything that people from other backgrounds with more extensive training could do just as well, if not better?” Employee

Annex A: Summary of Information Sources

GHS and RHS Focused Group Discussions			
Description	Stakeholder Group	Date	Participants
Not identity based	Students	March 25, 2021	12
Not identity based	Parents/Guardians and Community Members	March 31, 2021	15
Somali-speaking	Parents/Guardians and Community Members	March 23, 2021	36
RHS and GHS Key Informant Interviews			
Stakeholder		Number of People Interviewed	
Employees		7	
Parent		1	
Student		1	
RHS and GHS Written Submissions			
Identity Group	Stakeholder	Date	
Racialized	Parent	August 21, 2021	
Person of Colour	Not identified	August 24, 2021	
Arabic speaking Newcomers	Parents	March 29, 2021	
Not identified	Employee	April 26, 2021	

Appendix 12 - Summary of pre-service and in-service training for SROs

Training Subject	Training Department or Organization
Pre-service Training for SROs	
<i>Youth Criminal Justice Act</i> and extrajudicial measures	
Diversion and the use of youth level service/case management inventory tool	
Introduction to the Protocol to Accompany Safe Schools and Use of Lockdowns/Secure School/Shelter in Place	
In-Service Training for SROs	
Violent Threat Risk Assessment	North American Center for Threat Assessment and Trauma Response
Introduction to community resources	
Childhood trauma and adverse childhood experiences	
Social media trends with youth	Ottawa Police Service's (OPS) Youth Advisory Committee (YAC)
Sexual assault response and interviewing children	OPS Sexual Assault and Child Abuse Unit (SACA);
Sexual exploitation and Project Arachnid	Canadian Centre for Child Protection (CCCP)
Hate crimes, countering violent extremism and radicalization	OPS Hate Crime Unit
Substance abuse	Rideauwood and Ottawa Public Health
LGBTBQ	Centretown Community Health Centre (Centretown CHC)
On-Point gang prevention and intervention program	John Howard Society and Youturn Youth Support Services
Annual Summer Training	
Refreshers on mandatory pre-service training	
Meetings with 4 District Safe Schools Principals and SROs to identify trends and issues	

Appendix 13 - Summary of recent administrator calls for police service

Type of Incident	Number of Incidents	Mandatory or Discretionary Notification	Involving Children Under 12 Years of Age	SRO Responded (Not Patrol)
Accident Report	1	N/A	0	1
Advice	9	N/A	2	9
Assault	5	Mandatory	0	3
Bullying	1	Discretionary	1	1
Child Exploitation	1	Mandatory	0	1
Community Concern	1	N/A	N/A	N/A
Custody - Parent Conflict	2	Discretionary	2	1
Cyber Concerns	3	Discretionary	3	3
Cyberbullying	7	Discretionary	2	7
Drug Use by Strangers (School Property)	2	Discretionary	0	2
Dysregulated Behaviour	25	Discretionary	14	11
Elopement (Leaving School or Home Without Permission)	25	Discretionary	16	14
Extortion	1	Mandatory	0	1
Fight	17	Discretionary	1	13
Harassment (Criminal)	1	Mandatory	0	1
Harassment	1	Discretionary	0	1
Intimate Image Sharing Without Consent	4	Mandatory	0	4
Misuse of Technology	1	Discretionary	0	1
Physical Safety Concerns	8	Mandatory	3	2
Police Report Filed by	3	N/A	2	3

Parent (Assault, Fight, Stranger)				
Referral - Witness - Community Service	1	Discretionary	1	1
Restricted Substance	2	Mandatory	1	2
Sexual Assault	10	Mandatory	1	10
Sexual Harassment	6	Discretionary	1	6
Theft	1	Discretionary	1	1
Threat	20	Discretionary Mandatory (with weapon) (4)	2	16
Traffic Safety	4	Discretionary	0	4
Trespass	12	Discretionary	2	7
Vandalism	4	Discretionary	0	3
Vaping	1	Discretionary	0	1
Weapon Possession (one was replica)	2	Mandatory (1 only)	1	2
Wellness Check	9	Discretionary	2	6
TOTAL	190	37 Mandatory	58	138

Appendix 14 - Summary HWDSB literature review findings

The literature review highlighted the following observations. This is taken directly from the report found here on p. 9.

<https://www.hwdsb.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/meetings/Standing-Committee-Agenda-1622755995.pdf> :

Canadian literature:

- The roles of the SRO are generally unclear, conflict, with little police training on schools
- Monitoring and supervision of SROs is inconsistent
- The role of the SRO should be limited to supporting schools with serious criminal behaviours and crisis and emergency planning
- Having police officers in schools does not give a causal or definitive answer as to whether the program meets its goals nor whether it has an impact on reducing misbehaviour or safety issues in schools
- There are mixed student perceptions of the program:
 - Some students feel safer and secure with a police officer in school
 - Indigenous, Black, racialized and students with disabilities feel targeted by police officers in schools although some sought help from SROs for being a victim of crime, for mental health concerns, addictions or needing employment coaching

American literature review:

- SRO programs were found to not reduce rates of crime in schools and, in some states, there is an increase in student offences
- Police officers in studies felt students perceived the police negatively due to TV and media portrayals of the police. They therefore spent time dispelling these perceptions by talking to students, engaging families and building rapport which they also believed reduced chances of student misbehaviour
- Prior to SROs, schools supported disadvantaged students and managed subsequent behaviours due to disadvantage; SROs were then given power within schools to deal with behaviour issues which lead to a greater number of arrests and further disadvantaged students
- Although the intent of having an SRO in school is to create a safer school environment, it results in an increase of negative interactions between youth and police which leads to more youth being referred to the juvenile justice system for assault, weapons, and drug offenses. Students of colour and those with disabilities are most adversely affected by such discipline
- Having an SRO in school increases the number of students entering the juvenile justice system which results in dire consequences to the youth's rupture with regard to continuing education, finding employment and accessing housing
- Students who are removed from the classroom and suspended for behavioural issues were found to be **10 times** more likely to drop out of school
- Neither school administrators nor SROs involved in the studies were satisfied with the SRO program in school
- Schools should not involve SROs in implementing school rules and limit their involvement to dealing with criminal behaviours only
- Police officers working in schools must be reflective of their practice and understand the consequences of positive discrimination (extra attention on racialized students to build relationships)

Appendix 15 - Recommended revisions to Ottawa Protocol and OCDSB policies and procedures

Document	Section	Proposed Revision
P.043.SCO		Revise entire policy and related procedures to limit police involvement in schools to responding to issues that require mandatory notification of the police unless it is a last resort.
Ottawa Protocol	8	Remove from mandatory notification list incidents that are not serious crimes and that are not included in the Provincial Protocol. Specifically, remove child pornography and threats of serious physical injury. Remove list of all discretionary incidents.
PR.533.SCO	2.1, 2.2	Remove threat of serious physical injury; giving alcohol or cannabis to a minor; bullying; vandalism causing extensive damage to school or property located on the school premises from the definition of critical incidents that must be reported to the police. Add in exceptions from the mandatory requirement to report to police for children under 12 and children with special education needs.
PR.528.SCO	2.6	Remove threat of serious physical injury; giving alcohol or cannabis to a minor; bullying; vandalism causing extensive damage to school or property located on the school premises from the definition of critical incidents that must be reported to the police
Ottawa Protocol	8, 16	Adjust language to remove the mandatory requirement for principals to notify the police clarify that notification of the police for incidents involving children under 12 is always discretionary as is reporting incidents that involve children with special education needs.
P.026.SCO	3.38	Revise to allow for administrator discretion in reporting incidents to the police that involve children under 12 or children with special education needs.
PR.525.SCO	4.1	Revise to clarify that police notification is mandatory for weapons, in line with the Provincial Protocol.
PR.544.SCO		Revise to include criminal harassment and indicate that police notification is mandatory for criminal harassment
Ottawa Protocol	13	Revise to reflect the legal requirement to have parents present if a police officer is interviewing a child under 12 or a child with special education needs. Revise to reflect that a parent or a third party adult <i>of the child's choice</i> must be present for interviews of children between 12 and 17.

P.026.SCO	3.38	Revise language to reflect that only violent incidents (not critical incidents) must be reported to the police (not all critical incidents). PPM 120 defines violent incidents as possessing a weapon, including possessing a firearm; physical assault causing bodily harm requiring medical attention; sexual assault; robbery; using a weapon to cause or to threaten bodily harm to another person; extortion and hate and/or bias-motivated occurrences only and that reporting to the police is discretionary for children under 12 or children with special education needs.
PR.521.SCO	2.1, 4.26, 4.30	<p>Remove threat of serious physical injury; giving alcohol or cannabis to a minor; bullying; vandalism causing extensive damage to school or property located on the school premises from the definition of critical incident that must be reported to the police. Add in exceptions from the mandatory requirement to report to police for children under 12 and children with special education needs. This aligns the definition with PR.533.SCO and PR.528.SCO.</p> <p>Adjust 4.26 to recognize that reporting incidents to the police for children under 12 or for children with special education needs is discretionary.</p> <p>Remove reference to the SROs involvement in lockdown drills.</p>
PR.534.SCO	4.4	Revise the language in 4.4 so that police are only permitted to conduct a search of a student's locker with a warrant. A request from an administrator is insufficient. Revise language throughout to clarify that the principal cannot designate their authority to conduct a search to the police.