

September 11, 2022

Dear LWSD School Board Members,

We are a group of Eastside community members who have come together to oppose the presence of armed police officers in our schools.

We ask that you please read this memo we have prepared for you, outlining the reasons that the LWSD school board should vote to remove police from our schools.

Over the last four years, members of our group have read the national research on SROs, studied the cases filed by LWSD SROs, and listened to the needs consistently expressed by Black LWSD families. All three of these sources point to one conclusion: there is no evidence SROs prevent shootings or reduce crime, and ample evidence that they criminalize childhood behavior problems and endanger children's wellbeing. The promised benefits of SRO programs remain unrealized and therefore cannot outweigh their risk.

While we recognize that the Redmond model reduces armed police presence by rotating the officers among more schools (including, increasingly, elementary schools), this is not enough. The safety, wellbeing and civil rights of our children require the district to end its SRO program.

Our study of Kirkland SROs found that most of their cases revolve around teen marijuana use (typically leading to criminal prosecution) and mental health crisis (typically leading to involuntary commitment). Youth mental illness and substance use are both extremely serious and delicate issues that call for caring, educative, restorative responses from a robust safety net of teachers, counselors, social workers, and nurses. Sending in a police officer to do the work of these trained professionals does a disservice to our community's children.

We urge LWSD to end the SRO program and redirect its substantial budget to programs that *are* proven to help students struggling with mental health and substance abuse, thereby also increasing general safety in our schools.

Signed,

MJ Carlson, LWSD parent

Kirsten Hansen, community member

Sarah Franklin, LWSD parent

Thea Warner, LWSD parent

Kristen Dorwin, LWSD parent

Joy Randall, LWSD parent

Sally Fouché, former BSD employee & parent

Elisa Tseng, LWSD parent

Greta Climer, LWSD parent

Susan Cozzens, LWSD grandparent
Alycia Ramirez, LWSD parent & alum
Amy Falcone, LWSD parent and Kirkland City Councilmember
Varisha Khan, Redmond City Councilmember
Joyce Shui, BSD parent
Allison Weinrod, parent of LWSD alum
Joslande Gracien, LWSD parent
Renay Ferguson George, LWSD parent
Sheri Kabore, LWSD parent
Sue Burrus, retired teacher & social worker, grandmother
Christine Kirkland, former LWSD parent
Michael Howles, LWSD parent
Marjorie Beyer Kichline, parent of two LWSD grads
Angel George, LWSD alum
Judy Kaethler, LWSD parent
Rich Randall, LWSD parent
Evan G. Kichline, LWSD parent
Jamie Warner, LWSD parent
Brittan Stockert, part of LWSD district
Andrea Gilbert Halbert, LWSD parent
Lori Steiner, community member
Allison Terwilliger, former LWSD staff/parent
Brennan O'Reilly, LWSD parent
Elaine Cena Walsh, LWSD parent
Nirali Patesh Shah, LWSD parent
Maria Alvarez Tostado, LWSD parent
Pablo Barcenas, LWSD parent
Judith K. Radloff, parent of LWSD alumni
Katrina K. Radloff, parent of 2 LWSD alumni
Holly Brewer, parent of LWSD alumni
Rex Remple, parent of LWSD alum
Emily Dietrich, LWSD parent
Ann-Marie Evergreen Granger, LWSD parent
Bernhard Klee, LWSD parent
Dean Wilson, parent of LWSD alumni
Jane Wilson, LWSD alum
Brian White & Meg White

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The National Data: SROs are a failed policy

SROs do not prevent school shootings.

The number of SROs in America's schools has exploded in the 23 years since the tragic school shooting at Columbine. However, in those years, **no empirical evidence** has emerged to suggest that the presence of these officers has reduced school shootings.

In fact, one recent study^[1] found that the presence of armed guards (including SROs) significantly **increases** the fatality rate at school shootings that do occur. Anecdotally, we can see this trend in the fact that both Stoneman Douglas and Uvalde had SROs, but in neither case did the SRO undertake any action to either prevent a shooting or stop the shooting once in progress. And even in cases where an SRO tries to stop an active shooting, the odds are incredibly low that they will be in the right place at the right time to do so.

The effect of SROs on other campus crime is mixed.

Some studies suggest that SROs reduce some types of crime on campus, but the full picture is complicated. As a 2021 study concludes^[2],

The results from our analysis indicate that SROs noticeably change school environments and student outcomes. Contrary to frequently cited objectives of SRO programs, the introduction of a full time SRO appears to increase gun-related offenses, perhaps due to increased detection and reporting activities of the police officer within the school. It also marginally increases the likelihood of a school shooting. At the same time, the introduction of an SRO does appear to improve general student safety by decreasing non-firearm related violent offenses, such as physical attacks and fights. This benefit comes at a high cost of increased disciplinary responses both by the school and law enforcement. We find that SROs increase the incidence of in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, expulsion, police referral and arrest, particularly in middle and high schools. For many of these disciplinary consequences, the increased use of punishment is over two times larger for Black students than White students, and significantly larger for

students with disabilities than students without disabilities. SROs also increase the rate of chronic absenteeism, a likely portent of long-term educational consequences for students.

SROs criminalize children's behavior problems.

While many school districts, including LWSD, have tried to limit SROs' purview to criminal matters and not everyday school discipline, research nationally (and our research locally) finds that police officers *do* regularly involve themselves in matters of school discipline. (One LWSD SRO directly said to one of our members, "If I didn't deal with school discipline, there wouldn't be much for me to do.") As a result, having an SRO on campus is statistically associated with higher suspension and expulsion rates.^[3]

Even more alarmingly, SROs' presence appears to increase the likelihood that a child's misbehavior will result in criminal prosecution, either through formal arrests or through cases referred for prosecution. An ACLU study found that schools with SROs refer students into the criminal system at a rate 3.5 times higher than schools without SROs.^[4] Another study suggested that SRO presence increases student criminalization at a rate of 4.8 extra arrests and referrals per 100 students.^[5]

Both nationally and locally, most of SROs' arrests and referrals for prosecution are for nonviolent misdemeanors that would have been handled at the level of school discipline in previous decades. Our analysis of arrests and referrals in Lake Washington High and Juanita High found that three-quarters were for possession or use of drugs or alcohol, most frequently marijuana. (See [section 2](#).)

SROs negatively impact educational outcomes.

Besides their obvious effect on students' interactions with the criminal legal system, there is some evidence that SROs are associated with poorer educational outcomes.

One Texas study found^[6] that receiving "a three-year federal grant for school police is associated with a 2.5 percent decrease in high school graduation rates and a 4 percent decrease in college enrollment rates."

A study examining New York City's "no broken windows" approach discovered that community policing — increasing police contact for low-level, nonviolent behavioral offenses — decreased the academic performance of Black male teenagers.^[7] While this is not a study of SROs, the findings may be pertinent since SRO programs are a type of community policing.

SROs particularly endanger Black and brown students.

Virtually every negative consequence of SROs falls disproportionately on Black and brown students. Rather than citing individual studies, we will simply quote this list of harms from the National Association of School Psychologists^[8]:

- “The presence of school police can amplify racial inequalities in school discipline (James & Dragoo, 2018; Javdani, 2019; Turner & Beneke, 2020).
- “Schools with school police are associated with higher numbers of arrests for disorderly conduct (though similar amounts of arrests in total), even when controlling for poverty (Theriot, 2009).
- “With police presence in schools, the arrest rate goes up for all students, but more so for Black students than White or Latinx students (Fisher et al., 2022)
- “Controlling for a variety of other variables (e.g., incidents of bullying, school location, poverty, suspensions) the increased association between school police presence and arrest rates was due to race alone, independent of other factors. (Homer & Fisher, 2020).”
- “As school police presence increases, exclusionary discipline goes up more for Black and Latinx as compared to White students (Crosse et al., 2022).”

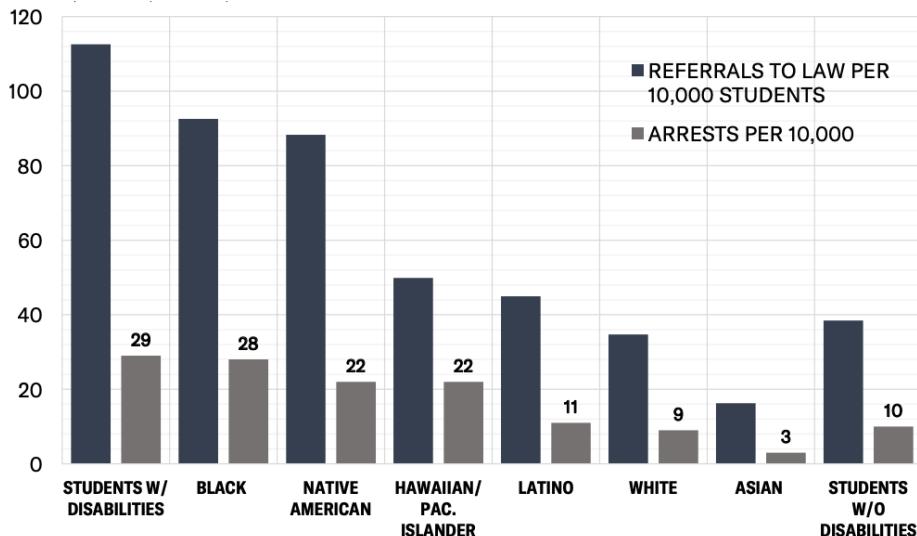
SROs particularly endanger disabled children.

According to an ACLU study using Department of Education data^[9],

students with disabilities were nearly 3 times more likely to be arrested than students without disabilities, and the risk multiplied at schools with police. While schools without police had an average arrest rate for students with disabilities of 17 per 10,000 students, schools with police had an average arrest rate for these students more than three times as high, at 51 per 10,000 students.

CHART 1

School Arrests and Referrals to Law Enforcement per 10,000 Students by Race and Disability



Data Source: U.S. Department of Education, 2015-2016 Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC)

A [Center for Public Integrity study found](#) that the discrepancy between criminal referral for disabled children was actually larger here in Washington than in the country as a whole.

SROs cannot be expected to support students with disabilities, especially given that they receive only two hours of training on supporting disabled children. A 2012 study^[10] additionally found that many SROs have extremely worrisome attitudes toward disabled students:

“Approximately 55 percent of the SROs agreed that ‘students receiving special education services were responsible for a disproportionate amount of problem behaviors at school,’ and 54.3 percent agreed that ‘including students receiving special education services in classrooms with other students is detrimental because of their problem behaviors.’ While most SROs (79.3%) disagreed that ‘students receiving special education services should receive less punitive treatment for their problem behaviors,’ the vast majority (84.8%) at least somewhat agreed that ‘some students receiving special education services used their special education status as an excuse for their problem behavior to avoid accountability for their actions.’”

In summary: SRO programs do not prevent school shootings, may make school shootings more deadly, and do not decrease crime on campus. They *do* worsen both educational and legal outcomes for students, particularly Black, brown, and disabled students.

SROs in LWSD: Criminalizing marijuana use and suicidality

Members of our group have submitted public records requests to receive the monthly reports filed by SROs in both Lake Washington School District and Bellevue School District between January 2019 and May 2021.

Within LWSD, we got the most complete reports from the Kirkland SROs. We analyzed the interactions Kirkland SROs had with students during Jan–Dec 2019, the last full calendar year before COVID interrupted the school system.

We found that LWSD SROs overwhelmingly focus on high school marijuana use — typically resulting in criminal prosecution — and students of all ages experiencing mental health crises and suicidality — typically resulting in involuntary commitment.

16 cases referred to the prosecutors' office.

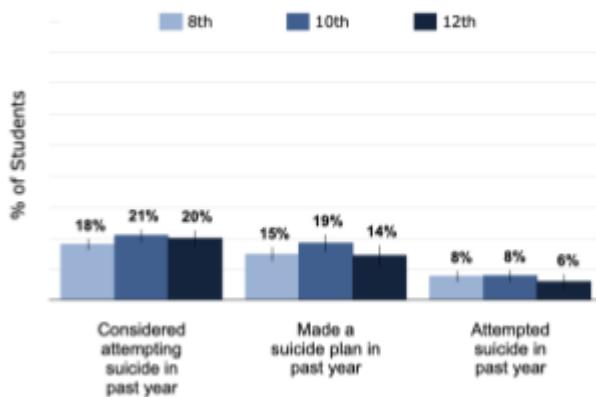
While LWSD SROs did not physically arrest any students on campus during 2019, they did refer 16 cases against students to the prosecutors' office.[\[11\]](#) Three-quarters of these cases (n=12) were for drug infractions, overwhelmingly possession of marijuana (n=9). There were also two cases of intoxication (one with alcohol, one not specified) and one of possession of cocaine.

The four non-drug-related offenses were for driving without a license, pulling a fire alarm, assault, and child pornography (a sex tape of two high schoolers, ages 16 & 18).

12 involuntary commitments.

During 2019, the Kirkland SROs also transported students to Evergreen Hospital for involuntary commitment on 12 occasions. Eleven of these were for suicidality, with the exception being an elementary school student with an “explosive outburst in behavior.”

Suicidal Feelings and Actions...
Students who report considering suicide, making a suicide plan, and attempting suicide in the past year



From LWSD's 2018 Healthy Youth Study.

Suicide is the second leading cause of death for 15- to 19-year-olds in Washington, which means that an effective and compassionate approach to suicide prevention must be a cornerstone of our school safety. According to recent Healthy Youth Surveys ([2018](#), [2021](#)), approximately 20% of LWSD secondary schoolers report that they've considered suicide in the last year, approximately 15% that they've made a plan, and approximately 7% that they have attempted suicide in the last year. Indeed, during the year we are examining, a Kirkland high schooler did die by suicide.

With depression and suicidality so common among our youth, it is of paramount importance that our schools staff enough social workers and mental health professionals to support students in crisis. Turning to the police to provide these services is an unacceptable criminalization of mental illness.

Parenthetically, the language LWSD SROs use in their police reports about suicidality is out of step with mental health best practice. The SROs repeatedly describe suicidal ideation as "suicidal threats" or "claims to be suicidal," language which characterizes suicidal ideation as a wilful act of misbehavior rather than a symptom of extreme emotional distress. Suicide prevention specialists suggest that using less stigmatizing language is important if we want those experiencing suicidal ideation to seek help. This may seem like a minor point, but it underscores the fact that police officers are *not* mental health professionals and should not be schools' first responders when children are experiencing suicidal thoughts.

Statements Opposing SROs in LWSD: The Eastside Change Coalition

In the aftermath of George Floyd's murder, a student group called the Eastside Change Coalition presented a [list of demands](#) to the City of Redmond. Below is their demand #4.

Demand 4

We demand that the Lake Washington School District abolish the SRO program, and reinvest the SRO budget into Community Wellness programs

Police brutality is rampant across the nation. Here in Washington State, we have witnessed the deaths of Charleena Lyles, Shaun Fuhr, Manuel Ellis, and so many others all at the hands of cops. Just a month ago, 3 Redmond police officers shot and killed Andrea T. Churna, an innocent 39-year-old woman, in her own home. The countless murders of Black and brown people have made it incredibly clear that cops do not provide safety for our communities.

Black and brown students are disproportionately harmed and criminalized by police forces at schools. They represent 31% of school-related arrests in the United States and are 3 times more likely to be expelled than white students. Student Resource Officers (SROs) increase youth contact with the criminal punishment system by perpetuating the school-to-prison pipeline. According to the ACLU, this is a national trend where students are funneled from their public schools into juvenile and criminal justice systems. Students who are punished for discretionary crimes are nearly 3 times more likely to end up in these systems the following year. Additionally, many of these children have learning disabilities and

histories of trauma, abuse, and neglect. Instead of being provided access to mental health, counseling, social services, and other resources needed to heal, they are isolated and detained (ACLU).

Currently, the Lake Washington School District spends \$184,000 per year on SRO enforcement in schools (LWSD Budget Report). This is a huge sum of money that would be much better invested into valuable mental health services and resources that actually provide safety for the community. Police are only reactionary forces, they do not stop harm or violence but rather respond to it, often with brutality rather than de-escalation. Instead, the district can take steps to prevent crime and cultivate real safety by implementing holistic community wellness programs and hiring professional mental health counselors that are trauma-informed and trained in de-escalation.

As members of the Eastside Change Coalition, we demand that the Lake Washington School District permanently cuts all ties to police departments and invests in the mental health and wellbeing of their students and communities.

We demand that the school district do the following:

- 1) Permanently abolish the SRO program. This includes the complete removal of all Student Resource Officers, Special Security Officers, and any other forms of police from every school within the district.
- 2) End all relationships to the Redmond, Kirkland, and Sammamish police departments as well as the King County Sheriff department. This includes their exclusion from all LWSD committees and an end to all recurring donations given to police foundations.
- 3) Re-allocate these funds into student and community wellness by investing in mental and physical health services, hiring more counselors, nurses, and healers, and implementing transformative justice programs and holistic de-escalation spaces.
- 4) Create a Community Wellness Committee led by Black, Indigenous, People of Color counselors, community members, and teachers to lead the implementation of community wellness initiatives, review programs already put in place, and decide on further solutions for providing student support.

SRO presence in our schools jeopardizes the safety, well-being, and futures of our students and communities especially our BIPOC members by adding to the racial traumas already impacting them and their families. While we acknowledge that members of the Lake Washington School District have had some positive interactions with our SROs, this does not excuse the harm, brutality, and criminalization of Black and brown people that continues to occur by police in our community.

Statements Opposing SROs in LWSD: The Right to Breathe Committee

The Right to Breathe Committee formed in 2020 to “negotiate policy change in King County” — particularly the Eastside — to “create safety and respect for Black people.” One of its nine [domain areas](#) is:

Defund school resource officers.

No armed police in schools. Reallocate funds to school counselors and mental health support.

In September 2021, Right to Breathe issued report cards to each Eastside city on how well they had worked with Right to Breathe in each of the nine domains.

This is how they graded the two LWSD cities:

Kirkland:

Goals	Key Strategies	Notes/Next Steps	Status
Defund School Resource Officers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Reallocate funds to school counselors and mental health support.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Funding requested by mayor for work to help find alternatives was cut by city council.Current voter approved funding in place, city believes it is unable to unilaterally rescind.Black parenting groups are working with Lake Washington School District for a district wide discussion.	

Redmond:

Goals	Key Strategies	Notes/Next Steps	Status
Defund School Resource Officers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Reallocate funds to school counselors and mental health support.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Reviewing Impasse. Direction from levy and School District partnership are among reasons cited.	

Source: <https://www.righttobreathe.us/dashboard> (as of September 2021).

Right to Breathe also wrote the following impassioned letter to Kirkland City Council in July 2022, asking the council to stop supplying SROs to LWSD:



RIGHT TO BREATHE

July 5, 2022: Comments

Submitted to City of Kirkland City Council, City Manager, and Chief of Police
By the Right To Breathe Coordinating Committee

As you study the future of the City's role with the Student Resource Officer (SRO) program, we would like to remind the City of the position of Right to Breathe Coordinating Committee.

Our position on this is clear. Consistent, in-school presence of armed, uniformed police officers harms Black students. Reports detailing the many ways this is true abound and are virtually undisputed.

In your discussions and decision-making, we encourage you to be equally clear. What is the harm you are seeking to prevent, decrease, or eliminate? And what is the sacrifice you are asking Black people to make in order to fulfil your policy aims?

Much of the stated motivation for expansion of the SRO program was to address the tragedy of school mass shootings. It should be clear by now that the presence of police officers – whether they were in the school in advance of an active shooter's arrival or shortly thereafter – is not determinative of the quality of the response. Instead, it is the readiness of the officers – their training, planning, and willingness to engage – that determines the effectiveness of the response. While increasing readiness among specific officers - possibly a tactical unit - may be an effective step in addressing the need to provide a robust and timely response, there is no reason to believe that individual SROs are the best solution to these horrific occurrences. So, if your policy goal is to provide the best possible response to the tragic incidences of active shooters in schools, SROs simply haven't proven themselves to be the right solution.

Active shooters at schools occur far too often. Having said that, they are still a statistical unlikelihood at any specific school. On the other hand, having armed, uniformed police officers in school on a regular basis creates a near certainty that some students will be harmed. Some will face psychological ill-effects related to the mere presence of armed, uniformed officers during an era in which mental health among students is in crisis. Some will suffer an increase in policing interactions - like questioning, detention, and arrests - for non-criminal activity. Some will be exposed to weapons drawn at them or in their vicinity, putting their very lives at risk. The evidence this is true is overwhelming. And all of these fall disproportionately on Black students.

There are those who have complicated the discussions about this issue by proposing there are ancillary benefits to having SRO's in consistent, ongoing relationships with students. However, the vast majority of these benefits would be maximized if the adult in the adult-student relationship were a teacher, counselor, or other student-focused professional with childhood development and/or mental health training. Right To Breathe agrees with experts who believe the resources currently supporting SROs would be vastly better spent in support of expanding access to these trained professionals.

It would be heartbreaking to continue to subject some students to the ongoing negative psychological affects and potential bodily harm of armed, uniformed officers in schools in exchange for the rare possibility that an SRO will be in the right place, at the right time, have the appropriate information, training, and mindset to intervene in a manner that will actually decrease the impact of an active shooter. The fact that this is up for debate is a painful reminder that the real-world wellbeing of Black students is too easily bartered in exchange for the perception of comfort and preferences of the White majority.



Right To Breathe has had the ability to consistently communicate the ways that the City of Kirkland has been a leader on the Eastside in making policy changes in support of the safety and respect for Black people. Given the fact that the City of Issaquah is in the process of devolving their police from the SRO program and that the City of Bellevue is in a significant re-design of their involvement, we would be forced to communicate that Kirkland lags in this area in the absence of policy action addressing the concerns stated here.

We strongly urge you to stop sacrificing the well-being of Black people in order to comply with the perceptions and preferences of others. Sunset SROs and use the resources to increase safety, support, and respect for all students, including those who are Black.

James Whitfield, Kirkland Resident
On behalf of the Right To Breathe Coordinating Committee

Statements Opposing SROs in LWSD: Lake Washington Education Association

In June 2020, LWEA submitted [this letter](#) to the LWSD school board. The last bullet point calls upon LWSD to defund the SRO program. In 2022, the NEA [also called for](#) ending the criminalization and policing of students.

June 22, 2020

Dear LWSD Board of Directors,

As members of the Executive Board, we speak on behalf of the Lake Washington Education Association membership. A change, long overdue, is occurring in our country. The district is obligated, as a public institution, to lead our community towards equity and justice, now and in the future.

Crucially in this effort, the Board of Directors and district leadership must dedicate resources to combatting institutional racism through concrete, defined, and immediate actions to address racial discrimination and racial bias that exists in our schools.

Black students and their families, Black community members, and Black employees of LWSD deserve to know that their lives, their safety, their wellbeing, their work, their futures, and their successes are valued by the district, and that the district is committed to this work in defined, measurable, and actionable ways – through budgeting, policies and practices, training, hiring, curriculum, and communication. The district's budget reflects its priorities, and the budget should change as priorities change. LWSD must make their own commitment to racial equity and justice obvious so that it becomes cultural.

LWEA demands that the Board of Directors and district leadership take the following steps immediately to address systemic racial inequity, racial discrimination, and racism that exists in our schools:

- Implement Black Lives Matter At School Week at all LWSD schools.
- Adopt a budget that clearly prioritizes equity work in our district, including paid racial equity work.
- Make the district's equity page on the LWSD website more visible and ensure that it includes our strategic plan for equity work (particularly racial equity work) and resources for educators, district employees, students and parents to help them grow in the understanding of racial injustice (and other systems of oppression, such as class, sexuality, ability, religion, gender identity).
- Conduct a full racial equity audit, bi-annually, of the district office and all school buildings to bring to light ways white supremacy culture is being perpetuated by any of our institutional practices. The results of each racial equity audit must be published on the district equity page and used to create a racial equity improvement plan.
- Create a plan to implement mandatory, ongoing training on racial equity and bias to be completed every year by all staff. The training plan, which must be published by September 2020 on the equity

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- Create a plan to implement mandatory, ongoing training on racial equity and bias to be completed every year by all staff. The training plan, which must be published by September 2020 on the equity

page, must be developed in partnership with school equity teams to include a robust and fully funded budget and a timeline for development and implementation in the next school year. This training must be reviewed annually by the district equity team using equity audit results.

- Adopt a school board racial equity policy and a procedure to redress racial equity conflicts which includes independent investigations of reported incidents of racial bias or harassment and mandatory racial equity training for employees and students found to have engaged in racial discrimination. The district equity team has drafted such a policy already.
- Review current district curriculum in grades P-12 for existing ethnic studies and diversity components; by January 2021 implement ethnic studies as a required curricular component for grades 7-12 and integrate racial equity social justice standards into the curriculum for grades P-12 in all subjects.
- Emphasize and prioritize diversity in hiring, including efforts to recruit, hire, and retain diverse district-level leadership; recruit, hire, and retain diverse educators and other staff through programs like micro-credentialing; include equity training as a prerequisite for hiring; and add racial equity knowledge as a component of hiring through the use of interview questions.
- Implement immediately de-escalation training for school security staff and any staff involved in student supervision.
- Defund the SRO program in schools and reallocate these funds to the social, emotional, and health needs of students.

LWEA stands ready to collaborate with the district in prioritizing racial equity work, dismantling racial prejudice, and calling out white supremacy culture in our schools. This work cannot wait for a better time or more funding. We cannot expect someone else to address these issues. We must act now and sustain our work going forward. This will require both direction from the Board of Directors and a partnership between LWSD and LWEA.

Respectfully,

LWEA Executive Committee

Statements Opposing SROs in LWSD: Superintendent Chris Reykdal

In 2020, Indivisible Washington's radio program asked Superintendent Chris Reykdal about his views on SROs. He responded (at [minute 23:40](#)):

"I do not personally support any practices that bring firearms into our schools. I just don't think that's healthy and safe. I think the covert aggression of that is real. And there is no evidence that armed officers are a mitigating factor in, for example, in national school shooting data.

...

"I think the legislature should step in and remove firearms from those folks, probably remove them as commissioned officers, and really make them ... perhaps someone with expertise in broader student supports and community engagement.

"But the law enforcement logic of this immediately creates an environment of imprisonment, and it has been well documented that we have more schools in this state with SROs ... than with counselors."

Statements Opposing SROs in LWSD: The ACLU of Washington

The ACLU of Washington's statements opposing the presence of SROs in schools are too lengthy to reprint here. Please see:

- [School Resource Officers: When the Cure is Worse than the Disease](#)
- [Students Not Suspects](#)
- [Cops and No Counselors](#) (from the national ACLU, but worth a read)

Of particular note are the ACLU's calculations of how many social workers, counselors and nurses could be hired for the same price as one police officer.

Since SROs are on average paid 1.8 times more than teachers and 5 times more than teacher's aides, replacing the SRO budget with student support positions would be an extremely fiscally responsible way to increase school safety.



Statements Opposing SROs in LWSD: Public Comment

A partial list of local public meetings in which local community members have spoken against SROs:

1. The Sept 2018 [LWSD school board meeting](#) (3:00-10:27 and 17:10-20:20).
2. The July 2020 Kirkland [Public Hearing](#) on a Black Lives Matter resolution, R-5434. (Hour 2:24-3:23.) Of the 18 community members who spoke about concerns about policing and/or racism in Kirkland, seven (39%) specifically brought up their opposition to SROs. Of the seven Black speakers, four (57%) spoke against SROs. No one spoke in support of SROs.
3. The LWSD/Kirkland SRO task force's [oral report to the city council](#) on July 7, 2020. This presentation is significantly different from the one the school board heard; it gave more detail and nuance about the different perspectives held and the limitations of the task force. (Presentation at hour 1:14-1:35; city council questions and discussion at 1:36-1:52.)
4. The Eastside Change Coalition held a series of meetings with city and school officials in 2020 on topics related to race and policing. Discussion of SROs dominated the Kirkland-based event, with the Black youth challenging officials on why the schools bring in police instead of

counselors and social workers. The SRO conversation occurs from [27:45](#)-
56:20, [1:03](#)-1:04, [1:09](#)-1:22 and [1:27](#)-1:29.

5. As part of R-5434, the city of Kirkland has held numerous focus groups with Black residents and other stakeholders in the conversation around policing and race. Page 13 of [this report](#) discusses the fact that conversation around SROs arose spontaneously in almost all the focus groups held with Black communities:

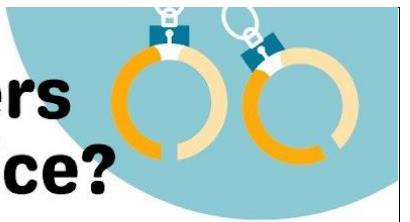
"Most focus group participants were generally critical of a police officer being in a school environment as it related specifically to the safety and respect of Black students, as well as students of color broadly. Some focus group participants characterized the presence of an officer in schools as itself a 'use of force' and that an armed officer generally made students very uncomfortable. Some focus group participants emphasized that an interpersonal relationship can't overcome an institutional problem, describing how one friendly officer won't erase years of evidence of police officers in general being an oppressive force. Some focus group attendees expressed past personal stories of negative interactions with SROs at Juanita and Lake Washington High Schools back when they were students there and described the traumatic effect of incidents involving SROs and students of color. Generally, focus group participants suggested replacing school resource officers with mental health counsellors, social workers, or similarly trained professionals to connect students to services, indicating that, although SROs may be trained to do so, they are not as highly trained in this area as other professionals."

... The focus group feedback related to SROs generally indicated that the experience of Black students and students of color is that they do not feel safe at school due to the presence of SROs, nor did they express having positive interactions with SROs. "

6. In May, the city council heard from Chief Cherie Harris about the 24 arrests of minors that Kirkland SROs carried out in the years 2017-2020. The information is also presented on [p. 122-127 of this packet](#). These include SROs arresting a 12-year-old for using drugs at school, two 14-year-olds for egging a house, and a 14-year-old for pulling a fire alarm.

We conclude with a summary of statements Black Eastsiders have made in these meetings:

What are Black Eastsiders saying about school police?



"Within the Black community, specifically on the East Side, there's more or less a consensus that SROs are detrimental to their development, to their growth, to their education."

— Overlake School alum

"Why is it required [to have armed police] as opposed to have psychologists or people who can actually help the kids in the schools, [and] who do not have weapons on them?"

— Kirkland parent

"Understand that, for our community, that use of force, [and] the SROs are a threat to us. And our kids are scared to go in places where they should feel safe."

— local resident

"I've heard a lot from the [Black] community that I've talked to that we need more counselors, or maybe more social workers in there, rather than police officers.

If you ask any BIPOC community member in the schools, they feel a lot more distrust with that than they do to any counselor. And I've heard stories of people who have been trying to get counselors and there's not enough."

— Eastside Prep senior

"When we talk about police being in schools, that's something that triggers me. There are 65 schools in our district, and each one of them have more police on campus than counselors and safe spaces combined.

How could we have one or two counselors in each school for these thousands of students, but those funds are spent on campus police?"

— Kirkland resident

All above quotes are excerpted from public meetings held in 2020:
kirkland.granicus.com/player/clip/4249 youtu.be/NmpXaSK8tgc

"Most [Black] focus group participants were generally critical of a police officer being in a school environment as it related specifically to the safety and respect of Black students, as well as students of color broadly. Some focus group participants characterized the presence of an officer in schools as itself a 'use of force' and that an armed officer generally made students very uncomfortable. Some focus group participants emphasized that an interpersonal relationship can't overcome an institutional problem, describing how one friendly officer won't erase years of evidence of police officers in general being an oppressive force. Some focus group attendees expressed past personal stories of negative interactions with SROs at Juanita and Lake Washington High Schools back when they were students there and described the traumatic effect of incidents involving SROs and students of color. Generally, focus group participants suggested replacing school resource officers with mental health counsellors, social workers, or similarly trained professionals to connect students to services, indicating that, although SROs may be trained to do so, they are not as highly trained in this area as other professionals."

— Kirkland's Equity Gap Report, 2022

- [1] Peterson J, Densley J & Erickson G. (2021). "[Presence of Armed School Officials and Fatal and Nonfatal Gunshot Injuries During Mass School Shootings, United States, 1980-2019](#)." *JAMA Netw Open*. 2021;4(2):e2037394. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2020.37394
- [2] Sorensen, LC, Avila Acosta M, Engberg J, & Bushway SD. (2021). "[The Thin Blue Line in Schools: New Evidence on School-Based Policing Across the U.S.](#)". (EdWorkingPaper: 21-476). Retrieved from Annenberg Institute at Brown University: <https://doi.org/10.26300/heqx-rc69>
- [3] Fisher, BW & Hennessy, EA. (2016.) "[School Resource Officers and Exclusionary Discipline in U.S. High Schools: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis](#)." *Adolescent Res Rev* 1, 217–233. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40894-015-0006-8>
- [4] ACLU. (2019.) [Cops and No Counselors: How the Lack of Mental Health Staff is Harming Students](#). <https://www.aclu.org/report/cops-and-no-counselors>.
- [5] Sorensen, et. al., ibid.
- [6] Weisburst, E. (2019.) [Patrolling public schools: The impact of funding for school police on student discipline and long-term education outcomes](#). *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 38, 338–365.
- [7] Legewie, J & Fagan, JA (2019.) "[Aggressive Policing and the Educational Performance of Minority Youth](#)." *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 84, p. 220, 2019. scholarship.law.columbia.edu/faculty_scholarship/2315
- [8] National Association of School Psychologists. (2022.) [Research Summaries: Policing in Schools](#). From https://www.nasponline.org/Documents/Research%20and%20Policy/Research%20Center/RS-Policing_in_Schools.pdf
- [9] ACLU, ibid.
- [10] May DC, Rice C & Minor KI. (2012.) "[An Examination of School Resource Officers' Attitudes Regarding Behavioral Issues among Students Receiving Special Education Services](#)." *Current Issues in Education* Vol. 15 No. 3, 7 Sept 2012.
- [11] It is, however, worth noting that a LWSD SRO was involved in the controversial arrest of a 14-year-old Black boy at KTUB in September 2019. The officer who used violence against the child during the arrest was not an SRO, but he was acting on information provided by the Juanita High SRO.
See "[YMCA calls for discipline of Kirkland officers after 14-year-old was 'thrown to the floor' during arrest at teen center](#)." (13 Nov 2019). Seattle Times, and the police department's investigative complaint [here](#).