Students Say NO to the SRO

Created by the Claremont Student Equity Coalition
Claremont Student Equity Coalition

The Claremont Student Equity Coalition is a coalition of various student clubs and organizations dedicated to the removal of the School Resource Officer from campus. This coalition consists of:

- Young Democrats
- Asian Student Alliance
- Future Minority Leaders
- Best Buds
- Environmental Justice
- Black Student Union
- Women of Color Empowerment Club
- Feminist Club
- Disarm Hate
**Purpose**

1. Present members of the school board and public with the most pressing problems CUSD students face
2. Prove that a School Resource Officer (SRO) is not the most effective solution to these problems
3. Map out a plan for district-wide progress by offering alternatives that are:
   a. Equitable
   b. Anti-Racist
   c. Cost effective
   d. Proven to meet diverse student needs
Racism and discrimination:
- As a predominantly white institution belonging to a larger public education system known to have many racial and socioeconomic disparities, CUSD must strive to employ deliberately anti-racist policies in order to be equitable. This requires constant reflection and correction.

American high school students are experiencing a fatal mental health crisis and Claremont students are no exception
- The suicide rate among children ages 10 to 17 increased by 70 percent between 2006 and 2016. *(Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)*
- CHS does not meet national recommended ratio of counselors to students

Substance Abuse:
- CUSD students have severe substance abuse issues that go untreated. There are currently no campus resources to help us deal with them without risk of punishment.
So, the question is...

Does the SRO best meet the needs of our students?
The CUSD SRO is said to be meant to deter crime at school. Regardless of intention, that goal is not realized.

According to the Dec. 17th presentation by various CUSD staff members, administration, and the Chief of Police, one of the goals of the SRO is to “reduce juvenile arrests.” No statistical proof was provided as to the SROs ability to complete this goal.

With a lack of CUSD-specific evidence -- as we have not yet been provided with data regarding arrests prior to the employment of the SRO -- we can only draw conclusions from national trends:

Schools with a designated school law enforcement officer on duty had disorderly conduct arrest rates close to five times those of comparable schools without such an officer. Past data analyzed by the ACLU shows that schools with police reported 3.5 times as many arrests as schools without police. (The Justice Policy Institute)
Prevention of Crime/ SRO as a Deterrent

It is important to note that policy intent is not the same as policy effect. When the Congressional Research Service reported on the effectiveness of school resource officers in 2013, they concluded that there was little rigorous research showing a connection between the presence of police officers in schools and changes in crime or student discipline rates.

Historically, the SRO either has no impact on crime rates, or it increases them.

Researchers found no decrease in the number of disciplinary incidents with the addition of school resource officers, and in some cases the presence of police officers was correlated with an increase in reported crime. (2011 University of Washington Study)

The presence of an SRO is associated with an increase of approximately one disciplinary incident per week. (2015 Adolescent Research Review Study)
Net Widening (when police presence increases referrals and arrests for minor incidents)

One of the few national studies on SROs found “as schools increase their use of police officers, the percentage of crimes involving non-serious violent offenses that are reported to law enforcement increases” redefining “disciplinary situations as criminal justice problems.” (Na & Gottfredson, 2013)

Studies “suggest that children in schools with SROs might be more likely to be arrested for low-level offenses...[and] may also be more likely to report non-serious violent crimes to the police than schools lacking SROs.” (James & McCallion, 2014)

“SROs contribute to the outsourcing of school discipline to criminal justice systems” (Fisher, 2019)

A study in Clayton County, Georgia found that the placement of SROs in schools made the number of referrals directly to the juvenile justice system increased dramatically, from approximately 89 referrals per year in the 1990s to 1,400 per year in 2004.
Nationwide Targeting of Black and Indigenous Students

Black students are three times as likely as white students to be subjected to school related arrest, Native American students are twice as likely as white students to be arrested at school, and Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander students are 1.5 times as likely and 70% of students referred to law enforcement are Black or Latinx (U.S.Department of Education Civil Rights Data Collection for the 2013-2014 school year)

Black children as young as ten are drastically more likely to seen as “guilty” and as “targets” in the eyes of police officers as opposed to their white peers (2014 American Psychological Association)

“I have seen officers pulling students off of campus with the students hands tied behind their backs. It should be noted that most of these students were Black” - Ellise Boardman
Two Years of SRO Arrests by Race (2018-2019)

% of student body | % of arrests
--- | ---
Asian | 12.4% | 4.3%
Hispanic | 42.0% | 39.1%
Other | 6.8% | 4.3%
White | 34.4% | 39.1%
Black | 13.0% | 4.4%
Four Years of SRO Citations Data by Race (2016 - 2019)

- **Asian**
  - % of student body: 12.4%
  - % of citations: 4.3%

- **Hispanic**
  - % of student body: 42.0%
  - % of citations: 45.5%

- **Other**
  - % of student body: 4.4%
  - % of citations: 6.8% - 6.2%

- **White**
  - % of student body: 34.4%
  - % of citations: 33.2%

- **Black**
  - % of student body: 4.4%
  - % of citations: 10.9%
Past Incidents with Claremont PD

In 1999 two Claremont Police officers killed a young Black man and later evidence found that the man had not drawn his gun, as the officers claimed that he had. That same year the two officer responsible for this murder were appointed as officers of the year by the city council member that pushed the hardest to employ the SRO in CUSD schools. If the Claremont police department has a history of rewarding its officers for the unjust murder of Black people, how can we expect our Black students to feel safe on campus with Claremont PD officer? The answer is we cannot, which is why we need to value the mental and physical well being of our Black students and remove all police presence from CUSD campuses.
Mental health in relation to Policing

Black and Brown students feel less safe at schools with SROs (American Journal of Criminal Justice, 2013)

Police encounters trigger stress, fear, trauma, and anxiety for Black and Brown youth, which harm mental health and erode educational performance (American Sociological Review, 2019)

An SRO’s presence can cause anxiety and fear for Black and Brown youth who live in overpoliced neighborhoods (American Journal of Public Health, 2014)

Credit for this slide: Rafik Mohamed, Claremont Police Commissioner
The National Counselor Association recommends that every school have a counselor to student ratio of 1:250, while the current CHS ratio is 1:342. To meet this recommended ratio, CHS would need 10 counselors, we only have 7.

If counselors are overwhelmed with a student population that is too large for them to handle and there is no person dedicated to drug addiction prevention on campus, it is not most effective to replace these necessary mental health resources with a police officer.

The suicide rate among children ages 10 to 17 increased by 70 percent between 2006 and 2016. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

Students are 21 times more likely to visit school-based health centers for mental health than community mental health centers. The school must be able to provide these resources for children who have nowhere else to turn to. (Journal of Adolescent Health)
School Shootings

The SRO is Not Likely to Stop A Shooting

- In 2018, of 200 gun violence incidents on campus, all of which had school resource officers present, school resource officers successfully intervened just twice. (Washington post)
- One of the biggest and most recent school shooting, Parkland, Florida, had an SRO present on campus who was unable to do anything during this crisis

Mental Health Professionals Can Prevent School Shootings

- 78% of school shooters had a history of suicide attempts or suicidal thoughts prior to their attack (U.S. Secret Service and the U.S. Department of Education issued The Final Report and Findings of the Safe School Initiative: Implications for the Prevention of School Attacks in the United States)
- Many perpetrators deal with “symptoms of depression or struggle with narcissistic tendencies, rage, and tend to rely upon the psychological strategy of splitting (having extreme ways of thinking).” -- American Counseling Association
“[N]ow more than ever, attention and focus nationwide needs to be placed on the mental health of the general public, particularly K–12 and college students. Counselors and educators need to acknowledge students who are potentially suffering from a mental illness, offer them the support and resources that they need via an alliance with mental health agencies, and provide workshops for parents in order to raise awareness about the association between mental illness and gun violence. This, in turn, will hopefully help to reduce violent outbursts in the school, as students and their families are educated about mental illness and encouraged to obtain treatment. Although educators cannot control whether or not students gain access to weapons, they are empowered to create a nurturing school environment and build upon the belief that healthy students are more successful academically and personally. According to the National Association of School Psychologists (2006), students who receive social-emotional and mental health support are more successful academically and personally.”

School Shootings and Student Mental Health: Role of the School Counselor in Mitigating Violence -- American Counseling Association. Article 90. 2015
CUSD Specific Examples of Ineffective Conflict Resolution

“When my daughter was being harassed and stalked during high school our family called the SRO and she never responded or called us back. My daughter continued to live in fear of harassment and stalking because the officer did not care about her situation.” Anonymous CUSD Parent

“At Sycamore, a 6th grade student held my daughter down and told her he was going to rape her. An officer came to the school and interviewed my daughter without either parent present. No follow up was made and the police took no action on this sexual assault.” Anonymous CUSD Parent

“The SRO came to talk to me when I reported my parents to CPD. The SRO’s follow up included calling a social worker who only spoke to my mother and not to me, never hearing my side of the story. Nothing was done except on my own part. My guidance counselor did more for me than the officer ever did despite that being her job” Anonymous CUSD Student
Conclusions on the SRO Based on Data, Statistics and Claremont Student Experiences
There is no evidence that an SRO is uniquely effective. However, there is evidence that suggests that the SRO exacerbates preexisting issues CUSD students face.

SRO Worsens Racial Inequity Within CUSD

- CUSD citation and arrest rates imply Anti-Black discrimination
- Perpetuates racist over-criminalization of POC youth

Ineffective or Non-Unique Contribution to Campus Safety

- SROs fail to deter crime. Further, they are unnecessary in the case of violent conflict on campus: not only can a proctor easily intervene instead, CPD has a 3 minute response time should police be needed. SROs do not stop school shootings that are underway. CPD can practice active shooter drills with CUSD without an SRO.
- Students have been in dangerous situations and reached out to the current SRO, but received no help

SROs increase the criminalization of minor behaviors (like substance abuse) that would otherwise be mediated by administration non-criminally. The SRO practices punishment instead of treatment.

Mental Health

- The SRO can worsen mental health in students of color by triggering nationally documented stress, fear, trauma, and anxiety. The SRO upholds a distracting, hostile environment of fear for some minority students
“It is not fair to our students to increase police presence instead of providing more resources, counselors, and mentors. Early identification and intervention is critical to addressing mental health and other needs. We should be placing more psychologists, therapists, counselors, social workers, and nurses at every school. These professionals are better equipped to learn about potential acts of violence, identify students with emotional or behavioral issues, and respond in appropriate ways. The effectiveness of school police officers should not be conflated with that of a school guidance counselor, social worker, student mentor, or educator. School police are sworn law enforcement officers who are almost exclusively trained and tasked with enforcing the criminal code. They do not complete extensive coursework in youth development, receive substantive training on age-appropriate behaviors for students in each age category, nor teach students within the school setting as their primary function. The approach of school police to students is often neither trauma-centered nor responsive to the negative experience of student populations within schools.” - Advancement Project, Alliance for Educational Justice, Dignity in Schools Campaign, NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc.
Examples of Thriving Schools without SROs

When officials at Intermediate District 287 in Plymouth, Minn. began noticing a few years ago that students of color with mental health issues were frequently being removed from class and arrested by school resource officers, they knew they had to do something about this toxic culture.

The district removed school resource officers from its self-contained programs and has employed student safety coaches for four years. These SSCs, as they are called, build relationships with students and strive to advocate for them when they engage in challenging behavior rather than punish them. They chose educational assistants who run groups in school, such as a social-skills lunch bunch, and are involved in activities with students in the community.
These unarmed student safety coaches work in terms of precautionary measures as opposed to reactionary ones, as the SRO does. They informally screen all students as they get off their buses in the morning by asking how they are doing. Then they spend time in the hallways, classrooms, and their office so students and staff can seek their aid throughout the day if needed. If a student in a morning class begins to show signs that he is struggling and refuses to do an assignment, for example, the teacher can contact a safety coach to check on him and figure out what’s bothering him before the situation escalates. These coaches essentially function as highly dedicated proctors who make connections with students.
SRO Alternatives

Community Intervention Worker: Community Intervention Workers work in schools, around schools and/or in the larger community, and may be paid staff or volunteers. The role of community intervention workers includes:

- Mentoring youth, particularly those youth who are most often impacted by violence and trauma
- Preventing and addressing bullying and providing rumor control
- Preventing and resolving conflicts between youth, groups of youth and/or neighborhoods
- Preventing retaliation and coordinating mediation
- Conflict resolution and restorative/transformative justice
- Helping youth to avoid and/or leave neighborhoods and providing safe passage to and from school
- Connecting people to needed services.

Behavior Interventionists: A behavioral interventionist has been trained to prevent misbehavior and to build the use of positive behavior in order to communicate. Intervention is provided ideally as a collaboration across multiple disciplines such as social work, psychology, counseling and general as well as special education. Interventionists might have other titles on the school site as the funding stream may come from special education, mental health services or other sources. The important issue is that there is knowledge and expertise in behavior analysis.

Peer Mediators: Peer Mediation is a process where students of the same age-group facilitate resolving disputes between two people or small groups. This process has proven effective in schools around the country, changing the way students understand and resolve conflict in their lives. Changes include improved self-esteem, listening and critical thinking skills, and improved school climate for learning, as well as reduced disciplinary actions and fewer fights. These skills are transferable outside of the classroom.
A combination of these positions, groups, volunteer opportunities or programs could take the place of an SRO and go far beyond to create an environment that is anti-racist. CUSD is at a crossroads: we can maintain harmful tradition or invest in our students safety and wellbeing.
Questions?