

# Culture and Climate Committee 3-27-19

**Welcome Officer Bernhardt and Valerie Cadet!**

Relax Robert rules

Officer Bernhardt works in Westchester county and is responsible for four districts. He is the liaison with a fifth. These include: North Salem, Somers, Lakeland and Hendrick Hudson (Bedford liaison). He started to work with Lakeland in 2010 and then expanded. He is responsible for coordinating the whole program which includes: training, selection process, and the application process. SRO candidates must be good at diplomacy education as opposed to just law enforcement. Many officers are wonderful officers but just may not be suited for a school building. The law enforcer in schools takes on a role of an informal educator, mentor and law enforcer. All officers are in full uniform (including their weapon). Training is required especially in the case of an outside threat and then there is an active shooter protocol.

**Questions from the committee/public:**

*Answering first is officer Bernhardt (until further noted):*

*What other criteria is involved in hiring/training?*

Need to be reliable decision makers and be able to work independently. The minimum training is a 5 day SRO program.

*Is there continued ed for SROS?* There is an advanced training but it has yet to happen but there's been ongoing additional training and there's also a webinar training and we are trying to partner with BOCES.

*How do we access success?* There is no research-based model. Success goes off of administration - positive relationships and good feedback.

*How much wiggle room in creating MOU within districts? What's the connection between team members and SROS?* Wasn't involved in MOU selection and it was taken from previous. No major differences between MOU amongst the districts he has been involved in.

Security guards and rapport with SRO- they currently deal with crisis management but not direct discipline.

***What is the difference between safety and school discipline?*** An SRO is not there for behavioral issues (hall, cafeteria, etc). An SRO has three different components: counselor, mentor and officer.

**Counseling:** SRO has student come into a room to vent once they see that the student may have an outburst.

**Programs:** criminal justice club and possibly internships ex. If you were being arrested what would the consequences be... would be a conversation instead of a punishment. These conversations are more about helping the student into the right path.

***Is there a partnership with counselor or a psychologist or social worker?***

There is constant communication. Connectivity is created between the law enforcement and the support staff. Not looking to create a juvenile record especially since many times there are deeper issues.

***How do you interface with students?*** There is a safety lane, an educational lane and a mentoring lane.

***Does the SRO interject on their own accord or only with input of an administrator?*** Many times there are specific referrals from administration. Some SROS greet students in the morning and some of them visit different areas of the building and interact with students and many can speak to any student as they see fit.

***Has there been any arrests?*** One student was arrested last year for drugs and many times because administration has requested. There has been an occasion where an SRO disagrees with administration on an arrest (for there to be no arrest).

Bond of police and rapport with community to break barriers with children. Most kids unfortunately associate cops with getting arrested or getting in trouble.

**Selection process: *who makes the decision for effectiveness? Is there a committee?*** Recently had a selection of officers for backups so Bernhardt and two lieutenants and control captain were on committee. Strong believer that the person needs to just “fit”.

9 SROS in four districts - ***are they already part of the community?*** Mix matched based on just the fit.

An SRO at the elementary and middle school level where the volume of service is different. With the younger ages, officers offer classes, workshops, and reading with them in classes all in hopes to get to know the students better.

Pros and cons of SRO transition from elementary level to higher up - one district had one SRO for whole district.

***Perception of cops from different socioeconomic groups or is there implicit bias sensitivity training as well for the perception on the cops POV?*** This is part of the 5 day training.

**Cultural Sensitivity Training:** 5 day training touches on this already since demographics are go different everywhere

SRO 5 day training is not mandated so neither is continued education training

Policy- there is random dry testing and there are check ins directly with Bernhardt. Each week he physically sees his SROS and there is constant communication via phone to emails.

The Principal basically runs the ship and the SROS are there to support unless there is a violent act or threat. The SRO should never get in the way of the Principal.

Some cops have PTSD and combat duty- may be good officers and may not be good for community. ***Is there a screening process for PTSD or a continuance for testing levels? Is there a screening process that recognizes if an officer has prior military service that may connect to PTSD?*** There is no real specific protocol for eliminating officers with PTSD from the process. Many officers in the past have had counseling and are safe to be law enforcement officers.

***This next set of information is based on Valerie Cadet, administrator in the White Plains school district:***

There are two SROS in her school district. She works in the White plains school district. One SRO in the middle school and one SRO in the high school. She is pro-instruction and not necessarily pro SRO or con SRO. They were already in place when she started there. In WP, the SROS tend to be based from the area. SRO should never be the the first responder, it should be admin in the building. In fact, Cadet states that the SRO is almost the last stop when she would need law enforcement. The school would accompany the student until a parent arrives when there is an incident.

**Benefits:** provide support w many things off-campus including attendance, missing students, rumored fights off-campus. Safety concerns include intruders and issues of weapons and reported to the SRO or if a student comes into the building and is heard saying something to the effect of “I’m going to shoot up the school...” this would be referred to the student’s home or even if a student needed to be escorted to a hospital or police station the SRO should go BUT there must also always be an admin present. A student would never be left alone with an SRO without an admin or parent. They would also help with an off-campus community issue which may include but are not limited to: cyber crimes like inappropriate photos or selling things online, drug distribution which is different than drug use. There is typically no referral to the SRO for vaping - that would go to a substance counselor. Try not to involve cops for prescription drugs or marijuana. The point is to help the students get the help they need. Even when there is fighting, the SRO does not sweep in and start cuffing kids.

**Note:** at Albert Leonard there are about 25 security officers and approximately 5 TAs whereas in WP middle school there are 2 security guard and around 20 TAs. WP did not want to outsource so many personnel outside of the classroom. There should be a shift in mindset of security to education. Is it possible for some of the security support staff to revive TA training to be part of the classroom? (Cadet’s question for the table... to think about/consider)

***How does the SRO interface with the two security guards?*** First of all the go to should always be admin and not security. Interacting: assist admin, patrol hallways, door coverage, deliveries, recess, early in the morning and after school bus as well as safety meetings, etc.

Many incidents happen outside of an actual classroom, teachers are expected to be in halls before and after classes and more TAs allow for help outside the classroom areas. They also have in WP two teachers who are paid extra to help with lunch duty. She finds that some schools are over outsourced in security and that teachers need to do more since again it is not the role of the SRO to sweep in UNLESS ASKED.

**TA training:** integrated co-teaching and they get trained in everything else that teachers do.

***WP: how long have the SROS been there? Do you really need them and what have they added (value)?*** They have been there at least over four years. She doesn’t know any other way since they’ve been there since she has. The SRO minimally impacts the school. We are educators and not police. The SRO is truly just a that, a resource. Teachers and parents may feel safer (which is a good relief) but there have not been any negative relationships that have come out of having the SRO present. WP has a strong community and their schools are very aligned with one another where New Rochelle seems less so.

***What is the impact/ reduction of safety issues post SRO?*** The presence alone of an SRO may help reduce- even though we may not even be aware of it. Some violence may have been deterred in the same way that people who are speeding slow down when they see a cop.

***What happens with the note taking and record keeping - is it all day or is it at end of each day?***  
Not every little thing is documented

Seeking information on cost benefit analysis of Security vs TAs.

***At what point is an officer allowed to take out his gun?*** If someone enters the building with a gun or if one is drawn

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## **SURVEYS:**

**Climate surveys:** one great survey that was found was the US Department of Education National Center for Educational Statistics

Surveys can only be held for so much (meaning how reliable are they, time of year, how seriously they are taken, etc). Even though the output can be flawed, it is still data!

Seeking an expert in surveys and statistics to assist in building our districts survey. Adam, John, Michelle and Tim will seek out options by next meeting.