

The Committee on School Safety & Security to the Leonia School District, submitted the following:

REPORT ON LEONIA SCHOOL SAFETY

[To accompany Policy #8467.1, and SLEO Class III Officers]

Date Published: October 30th, 2018

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | Page |
|---|-------------|
| I. Purpose..... | 3 |
| II. Timeline of Committee Activities..... | 3 |
| III. Statement on LEOs..... | 6 |
| IV. Information Used..... | 10 |
| V. Local Schools with LEOs..... | 12 |

PREPARE BY:

Ms. Mary Albanese
Ms. Sandy Klein
Mr. Steven Meester
Mr. Bryce Robins

Purpose:

At the June 12th, 2018, BOE meeting, a policy on SLEO-Class III Officers was considered, which directed the Leonia Police department to initiate the process of hiring retired police officers who would meet the qualifications set forth and approved by both the State of New Jersey and the Leonia School Board. If passed, the School Board and Police Department would need to agree on a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) before any placements were made. The proposal failed, however, and a succeeding vote, motioned by Board Member Noreen Wilds, placed the issue on the BOE meeting agenda scheduled for August 2nd. At the June 25th meeting, resulting from a suggestion by Board Member Neo Antoniadis, Board President Lisa Klein selected an ad hoc school safety committee. The committee was chaired by Mary Albanese and included Sandy Klein, Steve Meester, and Bryce Robins. The task of this committee was to report back to the Board with recommendations on safety and security improvements, and how to proceed with the Class III policy or alternatives.

Timeline of Committee's Activities:

July 2nd

- Committee is formed.

July 5th

- Ms. Albanese organized a meeting with Leonia Chief of Police Tom Rowe at the Leonia Police Department. In attendance were Mr. Robins, Ms. Albanese, and Ms. Klein. The conversation focused on what a class III program would look like for Leonia.

The month of July

- Individuals on the committee met with members of the community and accepted research and articles from the public. Several committee meetings took place to discuss progress, developing ideas, and comparisons of research.
- Superintendent Ed Bertolini approves the Raptor (ID scanning) System for each building in the school district.

July 16th

- Superintendent Bertolini and Mr. Robins have a conference call with Rave Mobile Alerts regarding their panic button app and confidential tip line.

July 17th

- To facilitate additional public discussion prior to the next Board of Education meeting scheduled for August 2nd, Mr. Robins organized two public forums, each to be held at 7:30 p.m. on July 20th and July 30th at the Leonia Borough Annex.

July 20th - Forum One*

- Pat Kissane, Deputy Chief of Police in Fort Lee, Joint Author of the NJ Safety Task Force, and founder of the NJ School Resource Officer Association joined all members of the Committee and a public audience to hear and discuss what a Class III officer is and the reasons for one. Approximately 30 people were in attendance.

July 30th - Forum Two*

- No speaker was invited for this evening. Mr. Robins and Ms. Albanese were the committee members in attendance. The meeting started with an update to public on the committee's timeline. Members of the public brought forth additional resources and opinions regarding the presence of LEOs. Approximately 70 people were in attendance.

July 31st - Committee Meeting

- Mr. Robins prepared a resolution that the full committee discussed and supported. The committee agreed that the resolution would be presented to the Board at the August 2nd Board meeting. The resolution authorized the Superintendent to do the following:
 - Add additional School Safety Officer to ACS
 - The hiring of a security consulting firm
 - Purchase a panic button app for teachers' smartphones
 - The creation of a confidential tip line
 - Obtain cost estimates for prefabricated security vestibules, fencing live-stream cameras, and window glazing
 - Create an access protocol and staff training plan

August 2nd - Leonia Board of Education Summer Meeting*

- A motion by Mr. Robins was approved to table the discussion on Class III officers until October.
- Ms. Albanese gave a summary of the committee's activities thus far, including a catalog of findings to be electronically distributed by August 7th.
- The Board unanimously passed committee recommendations for initial security improvements from the July 31st committee meeting.

August 3rd

- Ms. Albanese, Mr. Meester, and Mr. Robins met with the Leonia School District's Director of Special Services, Anthony Servis. The discussion was primarily about having a Class III Officer around students with special needs and disabilities. The committee also discussed mental health, mindfulness programs, counseling, and special needs services.
- Ms. Albanese, Mr. Meester, and Mr. Robins met with Representatives of the Teachers Union, President John Sassi, and Kristen Richter. The conversation focused on the opinions of Teachers regarding security and their input on advancing school safety.

August 6th

- All committee members and Superintendent Bertolini met with Erin Bruno, Director of the Developing Safe and Civil Schools Program at Rutgers University. Her presentation included a discussion of Social and Emotional Learning practices to develop a safe, supportive culture and climate in the schools and community for the prevention of violence in at-risk kids.
- The committee discussed the need to have a policy concerning the SSOs bringing their firearms on school property if they choose to carry a firearm. The committee unanimously supported the creation of a policy that allows SSOs to bring their firearm onto school property under the condition that they immediately put the firearm in specially designated firearm safes upon entering the building. The policy was recommended and adopted for two reasons: (1) the alternative to storing the firearm in a secure safe would be to leave the firearm in a locked vehicle and this is deemed to be less secure and safe; and (2) prohibiting the SSOs from carrying a firearm to the school may significantly limit the availability of SSOs for the Leonia school district.

The Month of August

- Director of Grounds Kevin Wood's installed a new live stream camera system in ACS and LMS.

September 11th Leonia Board of Education meeting

- A policy on firearms is unanimously approved by the Board to allow SSO's to lock their firearms (if carrying) in a firearm safe immediately upon entering a school building.
- Mr. Robins introduces a draft resolution on restorative justice to be voted on at the following meeting.

Month of September

- Superintendent Bertolini implements exterior drop-off boxes, as well as refining and enforcing the procedures for faculty, visitors, and volunteers at the schools.
- Director of Special Services Anthony Servis introduces workshops for teachers and counselors for mindfulness training and practices to be added to all grade levels.

October 4th

- Ms. Albanese attended the County School Boards meeting where she listened to a panel of speakers advocating for SRO's, SLEO's, and Class III's in schools.

October 16th Leonia Board of Education Meeting

- No Action was taken on Class III officers. However, a timeline of the committees next steps was released.
- The Board voted unanimously in support of Mr. Robins' resolution which commits the Leonia School District to adopt restorative justice philosophies and practices.

Month of October

- The district unveiled its panic app for emergency responses and confidential tip line.
- Superintendent Bertolini hired an independent security assessment firm to evaluate the schools.

- The Vice Principals from all three buildings created their own security reports for their schools.
- The Committee awaits pricing estimates on Fencing, and window glazing.
- Ms. Albanese attended the NJSBA Annual Workshop Conference Oct. 23rd-25th for classes and lectures on school safety and security, social and emotional learning, education/justice partnership, mindfulness practices in schools, and others.

October 30th Leonia Board of Education Meeting

- The committee presents their final draft report of findings to the full Board.

Statement on LEOs:

There are currently 50.76 million students who walk the halls of American public schools, and in all of 2017, there were 44 shootings in elementary and secondary schools, resulting in 25 deaths and 60 injuries.¹ Since the Columbine shooting in 1999, 187,000 students have seen gun violence while in school.² While such numbers should be alarming to everyone, the data indicates that the statistical odds of being in a school shooting are incredibly low; in fact, schools remain among the safest places for children in the United States.³

The anxiety of a school shooting, however, has prompted lawmakers and school districts across the country to take various actions, all with the same objective, prevent a school shooting, and if one occurs, minimize the amount of death that follows. Among those actions, the addition of Law Enforcement Officers (LEOs) has become quite common in schools across America. In 2018, 42 percent of public schools reported to have a School Resource Officer (SRO), and since 2012, SROs have become the fastest growing area of law enforcement.⁴

¹ Lopez. "2018 Has Already Outpaced 2017 in K-12 School Shooting Deaths." Vox. May 25, 2018. Accessed October 30, 2018. <https://www.vox.com/2018/5/25/17394338/school-shootings-noblesville-indiana>.

² Cox, John Woodrow, and Steven Rich. "187,000 Students Have Been Exposed to Gun Violence at School since Columbine. Many Are Never the Same." Chicagotribune.com. March 24, 2018. Accessed October 30, 2018. <https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/ct-what-happens-to-children-who-survive-school-shootings-in-america-20180323-story.html>.

³ United States. Congressional Research Center. By Nathan James and Gail McCallion. June 26, 2013. Accessed October 30, 2018. <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R43126.pdf>.

⁴ "Frequently Asked Questions." National Association of School Resource Officers. Accessed October 30, 2018. <https://nasro.org/frequently-asked-questions/>.

While the presence of a Law Enforcement Officer (LEO) can provide a more immediate response time to a situation, there is no data to suggest they stop them. That said, it remains a common belief among law enforcement experts that the experience and training of a LEO in the event of a situation makes their presence advantageous. Furthermore, there is no data available to support the notion the presence of a LEO reduces the likelihood of a school shooting occurring; in fact, there is no reliable way to derive a conclusion one way the other on this question as school districts, facilities, officers and security protocols are varied from school to school.⁵

Nevertheless, data can show a limited set of facts. For instance, shooters are overwhelmingly white males and show specific, usually identifiable, behaviors before an attack.⁶ Data also suggest that active-shootings in the last ten years have increased in their frequency and deadliness with educational environments being the second-largest location grouping (24.4%) and of those incidents, small - and medium-sized communities where budget constraints and small workforces limit police departments were the most likely to suffer from a shooting.⁷ The average active-shooter incident lasts 12 minutes and 37 percent last less than 5 minutes.⁸ In 57 percent of the shootings, an officer arrived while the gunfire remained underway and the shooter often stops as soon as they hear or sees law enforcement, sometimes turning their anger or aggression on law enforcement.⁹

Despite the unclear results a LEO has on a school shooting, there is a belief that having an armed officer stationed in a school reduces response time should an active shooter incident occur.

⁵ United States. Congressional Research Center.

⁶ Schweit, Katherine W. "Addressing the Problem of the Active Shooter." FBI. May 07, 2013. Accessed October 30, 2018. <https://leb.fbi.gov/articles/featured-articles/addressing-the-problem-of-the-active-shooter>.

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Ibid

Moreover, when placed in a clearly defined program, an LEO may potentially be a significant benefit to a school community. In many schools, LEOs have open office policies and serve as counselors, coaches, and a role model for all students, notably for at-risk youth. Additionally, LEOs help form trust between youth and law enforcement. However, the benefit to the school community may be largely dependent on demographic and cultural factors specific to the school district.

That considered, there are numerous concerns regarding the impact of a permanent law enforcement presence on students, namely, criminalization of typical teenage behavior, accidental discharge, and increased stress levels for students. Concerning criminalization of students, a school districts Memorandum of Understanding plays a significant role in whether or not this issue appears. The problem of accidental discharge can be minimized by outlining in an MOU when an officer may remove their firearm from their holster. For example, an MOU may describe that "an officer under no circumstances other than after witnessing the potential use or use of deadly force may remove their firearm." However, the potential to heighten stress levels for students remains a concern. In the academic article *Preventing School Shootings: The Effectiveness of Safety Measures*, author Cheryl Lero Jonson suggests that highly visible security measures within schools may decrease the sense of safety among the student body, particularly for minorities.^{10 11} Any actions which may add to increased stress levels for students must be considered carefully.¹² Nevertheless, it appears that the stress causing mechanism at work with the highly visible security

¹⁰ Lero Jonson, Cheryl (2017). Preventing School Shootings: The Effectiveness of Safety Measures. Victims and Offenders. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/15564886.2017.1307293>

¹¹ Perumean-Chaney, S. and Sutton, L. (2012) Students and Perceived School Safety: The Impact of School Safety Measures. American Journal of Criminal Justice. Springer. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12103-012-9182-2>

¹² https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr67/nvsr67_06.pdf

measures is the overt visibility of those measures.¹³ Subsequently, it may then be conceivable to have a SLEO presents in such a manner that they appear to be no different than the districts existing safety officers, which would mitigate this mechanism for a potential increase in stress.

Leonia's Next Steps with A Law Enforcement Presence:

This Committee acknowledges (i) the extremely unlikely threat of a school shooting; (ii) the potential benefits and detriments of a permanent law enforcement presence; (iii) and the strong and differing opinions on the issue of SLEOs both within the community and on the BOE. Thus, the committee advises that the question of adopting a policy which would bring LEOs into the school district be revisited as these considerations may continue to evolve. That said, should the Board feel it is in the best interest of the district, the following conditions should be met before an agreement:

The School Board supports a draft MOU which, clearly outlines the role of the LEO. It should be stated that any LEO will follow NASRO's best practices and not arrest students for disciplinary issues that would be handled by teachers and/or administrators if the LEO were not there. Above all, if any officer is allowed to be a permanent presence, they must be a welcoming and friendly individual, who is socially conscious of specific students and their requirements, values, and disabilities.

Furthermore, any hired LEO must have a complete background check, and annual psychological evaluation proves their ability to perform with the police department on a monthly basis and take any additional training courses prescribed by the school district. The Final agreement with the municipality should equitably share the cost with the municipality covering the cost of all the equipment the officer would have: Radio, Firearm, Uniforms, etc. With the above

accomplished, this committee feels comfortable moving forward the best way possible for our district.

Information Used:

Reports / Research

Case Studies of 19 School Resource Officer (SRO) Programs

<https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/209271.pdf>

Carleton University Report <https://carleton.ca/peel/wp-content/uploads/sprott-peel-full-study.pdf?pdf=full-study-pdf>

Center for Disease Control: https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr67/nvsr67_06.pdf

Congressional Research Service

<https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R43126.pdf>

FBI: Addressing the Problem of the Active Shooter

<https://leb.fbi.gov/articles/featured-articles/addressing-the-problem-of-the-active-shooter>

FBI: 2000 to 2017 Active Shooter Incidents

<https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/active-shooter-incidents-2000-2017.pdf/view>

A Framework for Safe and Successful Schools

<https://www.schoolcounselor.org/asca/media/asca/home/FrameworkforSafeandSuccessfulSchoolEnvironments.PDF>

Gun Violence Archive

<https://www.gunviolencearchive.org>

<https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/query>

<https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/query/ea951047-6986-48c1-b393-fd8f467eed9b>

The Impact of School Resource Officer Interaction on Students Feelings About School and School Police

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/297897099_The_Impact_of_School_Resource_Officer_Interaction_on_Students_Feelings_About_School_and_School_Police

Defining SLEO

ACLU Policing in Schools - The importance of the MOU when hiring LEOs for your district

https://www.aclu.org/files/pdfs/racialjustice/whitepaper_policinginschools.pdf

Outline of Requirements - Requirements to be a Class III officer

https://www.state.nj.us/lps/dcj/njptc/pdf/SLEO-III_Checklist.pdf

Recommendation of NJSBA (makes the case for and against SRO's based on school's needs, budget, and demographics)

<https://www.njsba.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/news-security-task-force-final-report.pdf>

NJASRO Setting the Record Straight on SLEO III

https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B1_v6A0VefLXbUUhBU0VCR0ZCN09IUzBkWDIxND11Vk1MZndr/view

NJSBA Support For SLEO III

<https://www.njsba.org/news-publications/school-board-notes/december-6-2016-vol-xl-no-17/school-security-officer-bill-supported-njsba-signed-law/>

NJSBA Video on SLEO III

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=65Hd5XplRU4>

NJ Task Force: Recommendations for SLEO In Schools

<http://www.state.nj.us/education/schools/security/TaskForceReport.pdf>

Mental Health and Behavior Based Policy

Call For Action and Restorative Justice practices

<https://curry.virginia.edu/prevent-gun-violence>

Improving Social Emotional Skills in Childhood Enhances Long-Term Well-Being and Economic Outcomes

<http://prevention.psu.edu/uploads/files/RWJF.EconomicBrief-Final.pdf>

Mental Health courses and training

<https://mhfa.com.au/courses/public/types/teen>

<https://www.adolescentpeersupport.org/events>

NBC: This fall, all New York students will be learning about mental health

<https://www.nbcnews.com/better/health/fall-all-new-york-students-will-be-learning-about-mental-ncna911031>

PBIS and Restorative justice

<http://www.pbis.serc.co/docs/PBIS%20and%20%20Restorative%20Practices%20final.pdf>

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports: What is School-wide PBIS?

https://www.nea.org/assets/docs/PB41A-Positive_Behavioral_Interventions-Final.pdf

The Positive Impact of Social and Emotional Learning for Kindergarten to Eighth-Grade Students

<http://www.casel.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/PDF-4-the-positive-impact-of-social-and-emotional-learning-for-kindergarten-to-eighth-grade-students-executive-summary.pdf>

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) By Maurice Elias, PhD, Academy for SEL; Professor of Psychology, Rutgers; Director, Rutgers Social-Emotional Learning Lab; Director, Collaborative Center for Community-Based Research and Service

http://www.ekero.se/Global/Uppleva_och_gora/Ung_i_Ekero/Elias,%20The%20connection%20between%20academic%20and%20social%20emotional%20learning.pdf

Articles:

The Conversation: Police in schools: helpful or harmful? It depends on the mode

<http://theconversation.com/police-in-schools-helpful-or-harmful-it-depends-on-the-model-91836>

Greatschools.org: Stopping Gun Violence in Schools

<https://www.greatschools.org/gk/articles/stopping-school-violence-the-latest-trends/>

Midland Park SRO - What Does He Do?

<https://www.northjersey.com/story/news/bergen/ridgewood/2018/10/10/midland-park-officer-explains-why-he-likes-being-school-cop/1566360002/>

New York Times: Secret Service Issues Guide to Help Prevent School Shootings

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/12/us/politics/secret-service-report-school-shootings.html>

NPR: Do Police Officers In Schools Really Make Them Safer?

<https://www.npr.org/2018/03/08/591753884/do-police-officers-in-schools-really-make-them-safer>

Testimony before the Senate Subcommittee on The Constitution, Civil Rights, and Human Rights Subcommittee Hearing on “Ending the School to Prison Pipeline”

<https://www.judiciary.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/12-12-12TeskeTestimony.pdf>

Preventing School Shootings: The Effectiveness of Safety Measures. Lero Jonson, Cheryl (2017). Victims and Offenders. <https://doi.org/10.1080/155564886.2017.1307293>

Students and Perceived School Safety: The Impact of School Safety Measures.

Perumean-Chaney, S. and Sutton, L. (2012) American Journal of Criminal Justice. Springer.

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12103-012-9182-2>

Literature by Peter Langman PhD

Author of *School Shooters: Understanding High School, College, and Adult Perpetrators*

and *Why Kids Kill: Inside the Minds of School Shooters*

<https://schoolshooters.info/why-kids-kill-book>

Local Schools with or hiring armed LEOs in NJ

- Bergen County Academies_(Bergen County Sheriff’s Officers)
- Ridgefield
- Palisades Park
- Tenafly
- Fort Lee
- Hackensack
- Northern Valley Regional Schools
- Hasbrouck Heights

- Fairlawn
- Secaucus
- Cliffside Park
- Hoboken
- Paramus
- Elmwood Park
- Bayonne