Special Policing Subcommittee Update

October 25th, 2022

Outreach Process

Students	In partnership, Somerville Public Schools and the Special Policing Subcommittee will conduct outreach to the school community. Below is who is responsible for conducting outreach to which stakeholders:
Staff	• **District & SHS/NWFC**: Students & Staff • **Special Policing Subcommittee**: Families & Community
Families	
Community	The PTA Council developed a survey to solicit feedback from families as well.

Potential School Safety Models

Model #1

Reinstate a building-based School Resource Officer at SHS

Model #2

No building-based SRO; any Somerville Police Department officer on patrol responds

Model #3

No SRO but partner with Somerville Police Department to have trained, dedicated Community Police Officer(s) available

Student Focus Groups

Focus Group Logistics

- In person during the school day (30-60 minutes)
- 12 focus groups ~ about 90 students
  - 2-15 students per focus group
- Moderated by Dr. Gretchen Brion-Meisels, doctoral students, representative adults from CPAR
- High level topics:
  - Definitions of safety & feelings at school relative to these;
  - Adult supports & accessibility;
  - Three possible models;
  - With any model, what else needs to be true.

Focus Group Participants

- Students who requested to share
- Students who said they'd be willing to share
- GSA Student Club
- Black Student Union
- LatinX Student Club
- EnRoot/Elm House
  - Portuguese Speakers
  - Spanish Speakers
- Next Wave/Full Circle
- Newcomers Seminars
- Class Officers & Advisory Board
- Athletics
- Student Mediators

*These are preliminary, high level findings from our early analysis of data. A formal analysis of these data are underway.

Preliminary Themes*

Key *Preliminary Themes from Student Focus Groups

- General consensus that the current model, Model 2, is least preferred. This is largely because of a lack of relationship and familiarity with the responding officer.
- Split preferences between Model 1 and Model 3 (leaning toward Model 3).

	Strengths	Concerns
Model 1: SRO	relationship between officer and staff; relationships between officer and students; officer trained in anti-bias and de-escalation; **increased feelings of safety in terms of fights & weapons**	feelings of safety/inclusion with officer in the building; presence of a weapon; escalation of small incidents because an officer is already present; school avoidance
Model 3: Community-based Police	relationship between officers and staff; relationships between officers and students; officers trained in anti-bias and de-escalation; **increased feelings of safety with no officer in the building -- and in particular, no gun in the building**	officers not immediately on site if something happens; fights & possible presence of weapons

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Preliminary Themes

Key Preliminary Themes from Student Focus Groups

- High level differences by sub-group → these should be confirmed with more analysis/data before decisions are made as a result of them:
  - White students, overall, were less likely to want SRO in the building;
  - African American students, overall, were also less likely to want SRO in the building;
  - Some Latinx students, many of whom were more recent immigrants, felt positively about SRO in the building; possibly related to past experiences with the police in their countries of origin.
  - Other Latinx students felt negatively about SRO in the building, due to concerns about being targeted.

- Consistent concerns across subgroups:
  - Racism/xenophobia on the part of police generally;
  - Police who might escalate a smaller issue, because of lack of relationships;
  - Desire to have adults present to prevent fights (not necessarily police).

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Preliminary Key Themes

Regardless of which model, students seem to want to make sure....

- There is high quality anti-bias training for all police;

- There is high quality de-escalation training for all police;

- Any police who will be in the building have the time/space/inclination to build relationships with all students -- students need to know the adults in the building;

- There is clarity around students' rights and what police are/are not present to do;

- Students have a say in the hiring/choice process when it comes to choosing officers.

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Staff Survey

Survey Process

- Developed a survey for Somerville High School and Full Circle School Staff.
- Survey sent out to all staff members (including educators, counselors, administrators, bus drivers, and more).
- Staff were asked about what makes them and their students feel safe at school and which school safety models they preferred.

Key Demographics

- **Total # of respondents**: 96 (SHS & FC)
- **Racial/Ethnic breakdown**:
  - 86% identify as White/Caucasian, 8% Hispanic or Latino, 2% Black/African American and 2% Asian or Pacific Islander
- **Average years of service**: 9.5 years
- **Type of roles**:
  - 66.6% Educators, 13.5% Counselors, 8.3% Administrators, 3.1% Secretarial Staff, 3.1% Nurses, Custodians, and more!

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Staff Survey

Key Themes

- Approximately 77% of staff say they always or often feel safe at school.
- Staff highlighted controlled access to school grounds (i.e. locked doors), visitors signing in and wearing badges, and use of security cameras as things that make them and their students feel safe.
- Common themes in the staff open responses include:
  - Wanting an SRO who is well trained and has ties to the school community.
  - Naming relationships with students and fellow staff as something that increases sense of safety.
  - Feeling that the physical school building is not always secure (i.e. many doors, lots of glass, classrooms with one entrance/exit).

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Preferred Models: Staff

<table>
<tr><th colspan="3">Key Themes</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">We asked staff to rank the three proposed models:
●   Rank 1: Model 1 - Building based SRO
●   Rank 2: Model 3 - Not building based Community Police
●   Rank 3: Model 2 - Call Somerville Police (911) as needed
Some pros and cons that staff highlighted around each model:</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>Strengths</td><td>Concerns</td></tr>
<tr><td>Model 1: SRO</td><td>Feel safer with a SRO; hope SRO builds relationships with students; want an SRO that has ties to community that students will identify with; trainings can help ensure SRO is equipped to interact positively with students/staff; can help prevent or break up fights; familiar with layout of the building</td><td>Concern about discrimination towards Black, Brown, or undocumented students; could social worker fill this role or work with SRO; worry it will feel punitive; need to be very mindful of who is hired as SRO; skeptical that trainings will make a difference</td></tr>
<tr><td>Model 3: Community-Based Police</td><td>Prevents students from feeling threatened, triggered, traumatized; good middle ground between Model 1 and Model 2; trainings would be good</td><td>Community police would only be responding to negative events rather than always building strong relationships; not enough of a presence; not as close a relationship to students and staff; slower response time to emergency situations</td></tr>
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Summary of Themes from Students & Staff

We asked students and staff to indicate which school safety model they preferred:
- Model 1 SRO
- Model 3 Community Police Officer

Overall consensus:
- **Model 1** it would be important to have someone who has done the necessary trainings and can build strong relationships in the SHS community, although a full-time SRO can make students uncomfortable, especially if the person is armed with a gun
- **Model 2** is the least preferred because it would not allow for building of relationships with students and staff and response time might be slower in emergency situations
- **Model 3** could be a good compromise between model 1 and 2 because the individual is trained, accessible, but not stationed in the school which could hinder relationship building and response time in emergency situations

Questions that came up:
- Can the SRO be plain clothes? Not armed with a gun?
- Can there be a social worker who works with the SRO to respond to incidents?

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Appendix

Student focus group questions:

1. *We want to start by inviting you to think about what a safe and inclusive school looks, sounds, and feels like. What would you expect to see or not see in a safe school? What would you expect to hear/not hear? How do you know (or decide) whether you are safe, as you move through your school day?**
2. *Looking at our list, how would you describe the school culture, and specifically people's sense of safety, at this school? Where do you see SHS/NWFC reflected in our comments?*
3. *When something harmful happens at SHS/NWFC, who do you think about the most useful/helpful/supportive people in the building? Where do you tend to go for support or help, when you see or experience harm?*
4. *Looking at these three models, what do you see as the strengths and weaknesses of each model? In other words, what's good about each model (if anything) and what's problematic about each model (if anything)?**
5. *Which model would you choose for SHS/NWFC? Why? What do you think would have to happen in order for this model to work well?**
6. *Is there another model – or a twist on this model – that you might prefer? Why?**
7. *If you were one of the current Principals of SHS or NWFC, what are three things that you would do to improve safety and inclusion at this school?*
8. *Before we go, is there anything else related to safety, equity, or inclusion that you feel is important to this conversation?*

(**) Denotes questions the HGSE team prioritized

Appendix

Staff survey questions:

- *How often do you feel safe at your school?*
- *Please select all of the options below that make you feel safe in your school:*
- *Please share any additional thoughts around what makes you feel safe or unsafe in school.*
- *Please select all of the options below that you think make students feel safe in your school:*
- *Please share any additional thoughts around what you think makes students feel safe or unsafe in school.*
- *Please share your thoughts around the pros and cons of Model 1.*
- *Please share your thoughts around the pros and cons of Model 2.*
- *Please share your thoughts around the pros and cons of Model 3.*
- *Please rank the proposed school safety models. [Model 1: School Resource Officer], [Model 2: District Calls City Police as Needed (911)], [Model 3: Community Police Officer]*
- *Please select your race/ethnicity. Select all that apply.*
- *Which gender identity do you most identify with?*
- *Please select the school you currently work at.*
- *Please select the option which best describes your role at the school you work at.*
- *How long have you been working at your school? Please enter a numerical value (ex. 1, 2, 3).*

Thank You!
Q&A

Special Policing Subcommittee information and meeting reports available on the Policing Subcommittee webpage.