

MEMORANDUM

*West Contra Costa Unified School District
Office of the Superintendent*

DATE: April 20, 2018

TO: Board of Education

FROM: Matthew Duffy, Superintendent

SUBJECT: Staffing Recommendations for School Resource Officers

Background

In May 2017, the West Contra Costa Unified School District Board of Education directed the Superintendent to develop a plan to eliminate willful defiance as a reason for suspension and expulsion. As directed by the Board, the Superintendent convened a group of stakeholders to explore the issue. Early in the process, it was realized that simply eliminating willful defiance as a reason for suspension and expulsion would not address underlying issues of disproportionate discipline or the trauma that contributes to many of the troublesome behaviors exhibited by students. A holistic approach was necessary.

The result was the Positive School Climate resolution approved by the Board in November 2017. As part of the resolution, additional resources were directed to trauma-informed and restorative practices, a review of the disciplinary process was mandated and the Superintendent was directed to gather information and make a recommendation on the staffing levels of the School Resource Officers assigned to District schools.

Currently, there are 13 police officers serving schools in the District at an approximate cost of \$2.4 million, which is paid with District funds. The District purchases the services of six officers in Richmond, two each in Pinole, Hercules and El Cerrito, and one in San Pablo. The officers are assigned primarily to middle and high schools, although they do respond to issues at elementary schools when needed.

Previously, WCCUSD had its own police department. The department disbanded in 2006 and the District moved to agreements with local cities to provide sworn law enforcement officers on its high school and middle school campuses.

Research conducted by District staff shows that of the 18 school districts in Contra Costa County, only WCCUSD pays for 100 percent of its SROs. Of the school districts that use official SROs, one pays 75 percent of the cost (Pittsburg), two pay 50 percent of the cost (Liberty Union and Brentwood Union), and three pay none of the cost (Acalanes, Lafayette, Oakley Union). San Ramon Valley Unified School District pays \$50,000 to cover part of one officer from the City of Danville and none of the cost for officers from the City of San Ramon. Mt. Diablo Unified splits the cost of the officer provided by the City of Concord, but does not pay for the officers provided by the City of Walnut Creek.

Statewide, several other large school districts contribute varying amounts: Fresno Unified pays 81 percent of the cost of SROs, San Francisco pays for 25 percent, Capistrano Unified only

pays for overtime coverage of games and special events, Riverside, Vallejo and Palo Alto pay 50 percent.

School districts in Los Angeles, Stockton, Twin Rivers (Sacramento), Oakland, Compton, and San Bernardino run their own police departments and cover 100 percent of their costs.

Recommendations

These recommendations are made after holding more than 20 meetings with members of the community and stakeholders since June, when the work around willful defiance began in earnest. Since the adoption of the Positive School Climate resolution in November, the Superintendent has held meetings with the Positive School Climate Committee, which is made up of interested stakeholders including United Teachers of Richmond, RYSE, Bay Legal, school principals, community advocates and parent representatives.

A number of unsolicited comments regarding SROs have been received by the Board and Superintendent from members of the community through emails and comments at Board of Education meetings. The Superintendent has received more than 100 emails representing the views of individuals and community organizations.

The Superintendent has also spoken to each city council, the West County police chiefs, all five city managers, and PTA groups throughout the District.

After receiving the feedback from the community and exploring the data around SROs, the following staffing options are submitted for the Board's consideration:

- Option 1: No change to the current SRO staffing levels. In order to better support positive school climate initiatives, move to a 50-50 cost-sharing model in the 2019-20 school year.
- Option 2: No change to current SRO staffing levels; move to 50-50 cost-sharing in 2020-21.
- Option 3: No change in SRO staffing levels for 2018-19 and 2019-20. Beginning in 2020-21, assign one SRO to each comprehensive and continuation high school. Assign one SRO to Helms Middle School to maintain the City of San Pablo's presence in the program and ensure the schools in that city have a dedicated law enforcement contact.

Under this option, the cost of SROs would be shared 50-50 with the cities beginning in the 2020-21 school year.

If the Board chooses Option 3, it is recommended that the cost of contracts for SROs be reduced by 5 percent in 2018-19 school year and by 10 percent in the 2019-20 school year. This would result in an estimated savings of \$120,000 in the first year and \$240,000 in the second.

Any savings realized from cost sharing, will be directed to implementing and sustaining

trauma-informed and restorative practices called for in the Positive School Climate resolution. Additional resources to be supported by these savings include training for school and district leaders, new teachers, and school staff; capacity building efforts, including train-the-trainer workshops; and providing climate and restorative justice coordinators.

Additional Recommendations

Other recommendations suggested by members of the Positive School Climate Committee include expanding Memorandums of Understanding with our cities to include the following:

1. Explicitly define the role of School Resource Officers.
2. Delineate the offenses to be handled by school administrators and those to be handled by SROs.
3. Beginning in the 2018-19 school year, SROs would be required to take part in trainings for trauma-informed and restorative practices.
4. SRO attendance at trainings to be included in the base cost of the contract.
5. As part of their assigned duties, SROs to be active members of climate teams at their assigned school