

**School Resource Officer Program Agreement  
between the New Haven Police Department  
and the New Haven Board of Education**

This Agreement is made and entered into this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2023, by and between the New Haven Police Department (the “Department”) and the New Haven Board of Education and New Haven Public Schools (together, the “School District”).

**I. Introduction**

School Resource Officer (“SRO”) support involves the placement of a law enforcement officer within the education environment. The SRO is an employee of the Department assigned by the Department to serve as liaison between the school community and the Department and to support the school administration and staff in maintaining a safe and positive school environment. Any individual hired as the SRO shall be a sworn City of New Haven police officer.

Each SRO is a visible and active law enforcement figure at the schools to which the SRO is assigned. The SRO may be a resource for instruction in the following areas: law-related education, violence diffusion, safety programs, social media safety, alcohol and drug prevention, crime prevention, and other pertinent subjects.

The Department and the School District shall review and adhere to the requirements and principles set forth in Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-233m, including the implementation of a graduated response model for student discipline and training for SROs related to social-emotional learning and restorative practices.

**II. Goals and Objectives**

- Establish a positive working relationship in a cooperative effort to prevent juvenile delinquency and assist in student development.
- Maintain a safe and secure environment on school campuses, which will be conducive to learning.
- Promote positive attitudes regarding the role of police officers in today’s society.
- Strive to ensure a positive culture within the school community by being present, active, and engaged with the student population.
- Strive to ensure a consistent response to incidents of student misbehavior, clarify the role of law enforcement in school disciplinary matters, and reduce involvement of police and court agencies for misconduct at school and school-related activities.

**III. Supervision of School Resource Officers**

The Department agrees to provide up to nine (9) SROs for the School District. The SROs will be generally based at the larger high schools. However, the Superintendent shall determine where SRO support is required to fulfill the needs of the School District. The Superintendent shall then communicate to the Chief of Police where the specific support is necessary.

The Department, in consultation with the Superintendent of Schools, and the Chief of Police for the Department, will determine who will assume the role and responsibilities of the SRO. If the Department conducts interviews for the assignment to such position, the Superintendent or designee will be invited to attend the interviews.

The SRO shall remain an employee of the Department and shall not be an employee of the School District. As such, the Department shall bear the costs of the SRO Program. The School District acknowledges that the SRO will remain subject to the administration, supervision, and control of the Department. However, while acting in the capacity of an SRO, the SRO shall take direction from the Superintendent or designee with the exception that while in the performance of law enforcement duties, the SRO will follow protocol established by the Department and its Chief of Police.

The Superintendent shall meet annually in June or July with the SRO Supervisor and the Chief of Police for the Department to discuss the job performance of the SRO and the SRO support more generally. The Superintendent may then submit a written report to the Department on the SRO.

#### **IV. Appointment and Term**

The Department, in partnership with the Superintendent of Schools, will assign the SRO's. It is the responsibility of the supervisor of SROs to notify the appropriate school principal of the SRO's work schedule.

An SRO will be appointed by the Department to each of the schools identified by the Superintendent, within the limits of the number of SROs available, in consultation and agreement with the Superintendent of Schools. If either or both parties wish to terminate this Agreement, they will comply with Section XIII below. If a principal is dissatisfied with an SRO who has been assigned to that principal's school, the Superintendent may request that the Chief of Police assign a different officer as the SRO for that school. Such reassignment shall be made in consultation with the Superintendent and the Superintendent in their sole discretion may refuse the SRO proposed by the Chief. In addition, if the Superintendent determines that a specific SRO should no longer be permitted access to a school, the Chief shall honor that decision and no longer assign the SRO to the School Resource Officer Support team.

#### **V. Duty Hours**

- A. SRO duty hours shall be determined by the Police Department. Whenever possible, it is the intent of the parties that the SRO's duty hours shall conform to the school day.

- B. The School District shall contact the supervisor of SROs to request SRO attendance at after-school and evening school activities. If such attendance requires extra duty, extra duty is subject to approval by the SRO's Supervisor at the Department.
- C. It is understood that SROs may be required to attend municipal court, juvenile court, and/or criminal cases arising from or out of their employment.
- D. In the event an SRO is absent from work, the SRO shall notify his or her supervisor in the Police Department, who shall notify the principal of the school to which the SRO is assigned. The Police Department shall assign another SRO, if available, and with approval by the Superintendent, to substitute for the SRO who is absent.

**VI. Duties and Responsibilities of the School Resource Officer**

- The SRO will complete, while in the performance of the SRO's duties as a school resource officer, and during periods when such SRO is assigned to be at the school, any separate training specifically related to social-emotional learning and restorative practices provided to certified employees of the school. The SRO will also complete LGBTQ Training and Trauma-Informed Police training at least triennially.
- The SRO will bring to the attention of the school administration and assist in the development and implementation of plans and strategies to prevent and/or minimize dangerous situations on or near the school campus or at school activities. Among other things, the SRO will collaborate with the school administration regarding how to maintain and improve school safety in all schools.
- The SRO has no role in ordinary school discipline or enforcement of school rules, although an SRO may provide assistance to school personnel at the request of a school administrator or school security officer in the event of an emergency or where the life or safety of staff or students is at risk.
- Any use of force by a School Resource Officer shall be limited to what is necessary, reasonable and proportionate to the threat encountered. Physical force may only be used to achieve a lawful purpose. Before resorting to physical force, and whenever safe and feasible, officers should first make reasonable attempts to gain compliance through verbal commands and allowing appropriate time under the circumstances for voluntary compliance. The SRO shall use a physical restraint on a student only as an emergency intervention to prevent immediate or imminent injury to the student or to others, provided the restraint is not used for discipline or convenience and is not used as a substitute for a less restrictive alternative. Whenever an SRO applies restraint to a student it shall be limited to the least restrictive and least likely to cause harm to the student while still preventing the student from causing harm to him or herself or any other person in the school. Before using any restraint on any student, as defined in Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-236b,

the SRO shall participate in the same training provided to school staff who are authorized to conduct restraint of students pursuant to Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-236b.

- As requested by the Superintendent or Assistant Superintendent, an SRO will present topics to students on various law enforcement/safety issues , including but not limited to law-related education, violence diffusion, safety programs, social media safety, alcohol and drug prevention, crime prevention and other pertinent subjects.
- The supervisor or SROs shall notify the Superintendent of Schools whenever any law enforcement action has been taken while performing in the role of SRO. The Superintendent may identify a designee for purposes of this notification and, in that event, shall notify the Chief of Police of that appointment. Once identified, the supervisor of SROs shall communicate with that designee to report any law enforcement action taken while performing in the role of SRO.
- The SRO shall maintain records, as required by the Department. The Department shall provide records as requested by the School District for their use in evaluating and reviewing the SRO program and this Agreement.
- The SRO will assist the Superintendent of Schools, principals, faculty and staff to maintain a safe learning environment.
- The SRO will abide by all applicable Board of Education policies and School District administrative regulations, including the Code of Conduct and all restorative practices promulgated by the New Haven Public Schools and in accordance with applicable law.
- The SRO will consult with and coordinate activities through the Superintendent or principal.
- If a conflict develops between the SRO's legal responsibilities as a sworn police officer and the SRO's responsibilities to the School District, the SRO's legal responsibilities as a sworn City of New Haven police officer shall take precedence. However, the supervisor of SROs shall inform the Superintendent of Schools and the Department of such conflict and shall work with school officials to suggest a means of avoiding future conflicts.
- The SRO will be available to students, parents and staff who freely want to discuss concerns.
- The SRO will follow applicable law, Board of Education policy, School District administrative regulations, and the Department's general orders in regards to investigations, interviews, and searches relating to juveniles and other students. At no time will the SRO direct or demand that school personnel search a student.
- The SRO will not be responsible for student discipline or enforcement of school rules, although the SRO may provide assistance to school personnel in these matters. The SRO

will work collaboratively with the Superintendent to determine the goals and priorities for the SRO program and the parameters for SRO involvement in school disciplinary matters, consistent with the Graduated Response Model described in Section VI, below. An SRO shall not have unsupervised and/or unmediated access to student education or health records. If the School District discloses education or health records to the SRO in accordance with applicable law, the SRO shall be prohibited from disclosing or re-disclosing information from those records where disclosure could violate the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) or any other law, City policy, or Board of Education policy.

- In the event that there is a criminal complaint or criminal investigation of a School District employee, the Department and the School District agree that the SRO will not be assigned as the investigator for any investigation conducted by either the Department or the School District.

## **VI. Graduated Response Model**

Classroom Intervention - The classroom teacher plays a prominent role in guiding, developing, and reinforcing appropriate student conduct and is acknowledged as the first line in implementing the school discipline code. As such, this model begins with a range of classroom management techniques that must be implemented prior to any other sanctions or interventions. Classroom intervention is managed by the teacher for behaviors that are passive and non-threatening such as dress code violations, and violations of classroom rules. SROs should not be involved at this level. Classroom intervention options might include redirection, re-teaching, school climate initiatives, moving seats; and the teacher should initiate parental contact.

School Administration Intervention - Classroom interventions are supported by school administrators and other school staff who address more serious or repetitive behaviors and behaviors in school but outside of the classroom. Examples of behaviors at this level may include, but are not limited to, repetitive patterns, defacing school property, truancy, threatening and behaviors in hallways, bathrooms, courtyards, and school buses. Administration intervention options might include time in the office, after school detention, loss of privilege, reparation, and/or parent conference.

Assessment and Service Provision - When the behavior and needs of the student warrant, an assessment process and intervention with the use of school services may be appropriate. This intervention is managed by the school administrator or a student assistance team (SAT). Repetitive truancy or defiance of school rules, and behaviors that interfere with others such as vandalism or harassment may be examples that belong at this level as well as misbehaving students who would benefit from service provision. Assessment and service intervention options should include any classroom or school administration interventions and might include referral to a juvenile review board (JRB) or community service or program, suspension, expulsion, or referral to court. Truant behavior should not lead to an out-of-school option. Police can be involved in their role on JRBs.

Law Enforcement Intervention - Only when classroom, school and community options have been found ineffective, or when deemed appropriate by the administration or in an emergency, should the school involve the police, including the SRO. Involvement of the police does not necessarily mean arrest and referral to court. This intervention is managed by the police. Law enforcement options may include, but not be limited to, verbal warning; conference with the student, parents, teachers and/or others; referral to a JRB and/or community agencies; and referral to court. In appropriate circumstances, law enforcement options may include arrest. Absent an emergency, any such arrest will be conducted in accordance with Section VIII, below.

## **VII. Uniform and Equipment of School Resource Officer**

The SRO will not wear the standard police uniform. Instead, the SRO will wear an SRO's alternative uniform which is currently or subsequently approved through collective bargaining with appropriate logos and name badges depending on the type of school activity and program and/or the request of the school or the Department.

It is understood that the SRO will carry a Department-approved duty firearm, Taser and other Department issued equipment. The SRO is responsible for carrying such equipment or otherwise storing and securing such equipment, including firearms and ammunition, in accordance with police protocols. In no event shall such equipment be stored in a school building or on school grounds. Such duty firearm, Taser and other Department issued equipment shall only be used when law enforcement intervention is necessary and then shall only be used in accordance with the policies and standards of the Department and applicable law.

As to firearms, the SRO shall be prohibited from drawing her or his firearm unless in the judgment of the SRO it is the best course of action to deescalate a situation when encountering an armed person within the school building. An SRO shall be prohibited from discharging a firearm within a school building except in cases where to do so minimizes the loss of life that would otherwise occur due to the presence of an armed person within the school building who in the judgment of the SRO presents an imminent danger of death to one or more persons.

Body-worn recording equipment shall not be turned on by the SRO while acting in the capacity of an SRO with respect to educational responsibilities or typical interactions with students, staff or other members of the public in the School District. The SRO will use Department issued body-worn recording equipment only when acting in a law enforcement capacity and as required by Department policy and in accordance with applicable law and guidelines. The Department and the Superintendent of Schools shall jointly set expectations and resolve any disputes in this area.

## **VIII. Law Enforcement Professionals/SRO Activity at Schools**

The parties agree that employees of the Department and/or the assigned SRO ("Law Enforcement Professionals") need to follow certain protocols when on school grounds in non-emergency circumstances as follows. Law Enforcement Professionals will act through the



Superintendent and/or Assistant Superintendent whenever they plan any activity on school grounds. Law Enforcement Professionals entering school grounds will be aware of the potential disruption of the educational process that their presence may cause. Prior to entering a school to conduct an investigation, arrest or search, Law Enforcement Professionals will consider the necessity of such action based on:

- The potential danger to persons;
- The likelihood of destruction of evidence or other property; and
- The ability to conduct the investigation, arrest or search elsewhere.

To reduce the possibility of injury to students and others in the school building, the SRO shall only make school-based arrests when delaying arrest until a time when the alleged perpetrator is not within the school building or at a school-sponsored activity will endanger the public. The SRO, when making a school-based arrest, shall do so in a manner calculated to minimize disruption and the possibility of injury to the arrestee and to any other person present in the school building. In the extraordinary situation where an arrest is necessary, then whenever possible, students should be taken into custody out of sight and sound of other students.

#### **IX. Police Access to Images from School Cameras**

It is the goal of the New Haven Public Schools to collaborate with the Department and the City of New Haven in city-wide efforts in creating a safe community and reducing juvenile arrests. In the event of a criminal investigation, the Department or other law enforcement agencies may request access to School District video images, live or recorded, by making a request for access to the Superintendent or Director of Security. Access may be granted by the Superintendent or other such certified administrator as designated by the Superintendent only when determined by the Superintendent to be appropriate under state and federal law. If access is granted, the Department shall abide by its policies and procedures with respect to evidence, juvenile records, and personally identifiable information.

In the absence of express permission from the Superintendent or Director of Security, the Department may only access School District live streaming video and/or recorded images from school cameras in emergency circumstances, including an emergency alarm originating from one of the school facilities or grounds or a 911 call pertaining to school facilities/grounds. The Board of Education shall maintain a connection to the live streaming video for the Police Department which shall be tested at least weekly. Any such access by the Department shall only be made for the purpose of the Department and other law enforcement or first responders aiding in the public safety emergency response to a school facility.

The Superintendent, Director of Security or designee may disclose video images to the Department, live or recorded, which include personally identifiable student information and/or video images of School District employees and/or other persons on school property, when there is an articulable and significant threat to the health and safety of a student or other individuals, or when otherwise appropriate under state and federal law.

A virtual private network will be used for live viewing by the Department when authorized by this Agreement. Other than system tests conducted by the Chief of Police or designee(s), conducted on a periodic basis, at times when students are not present in the building, the Department will not routinely view School District video images, live, or recorded, to monitor the schools or grounds.

#### **X. Duties of the School District**

The School District shall provide to the SRO the following materials and facilities which are deemed necessary to the performance of the SRO.

- An office at the school to which the SRO is primarily assigned.
- A desk with drawers, a chair and filing drawers.
- A computer and phone.
- Assigned parking space(s).
- Access to inspect and copy public records maintained by the school to the extent allowed by law.
- Training specifically related to social-emotional learning, restorative practices, physical restraint, and other training that is provided to certified employees of the school, in accordance with Conn. Gen. Stat. §10-233m.

#### **XI. Data Collection and Monitoring**

The parties agree that they will provide baseline data for comparison purposes and regularly collect, share, monitor and report data resulting from the implementation of this Agreement.

Data Collection: On a **quarterly** basis, the following information will be collected:

School—de-identified data on the number and types of disciplinary actions, numbers and demographics of students involved, referrals to Law Enforcement Professionals.

Department—number and types of school incidents for which Law Enforcement Professional incident reports are written, Law Enforcement Professional actions on incidents.

Monitoring and Oversight: On a regular basis and at least quarterly, the parties acknowledge and agree that the Chief of Police for the Department and the Superintendent of Schools or designee will meet to provide oversight of the Agreement and review relevant data and analysis. At least annually, in June or July, the parties will discuss improvements to the Agreement and/or its implementation.

#### **XII. Reporting of Investigations and Behavioral Interventions**



In accordance with state law requirements, each SRO shall submit a report to the Chief of Police for each investigation or behavioral intervention of challenging behavior or conflict that (1) they conduct and (2) escalates to violence or constitutes a crime, no later than five school days after conducting such investigation or behavioral intervention. An "investigation or behavioral intervention" is "a circumstance in which a school resource officer is conducting (i) a fact-finding inquiry concerning student behavior or school safety, including, but not limited to, emergency circumstances, or (ii) an intervention to resolve violent or nonviolent student behavior or conflicts."

The SRO's report shall include: (1) the date, time and location of such investigation or behavioral intervention, (2) the name and badge number of the SRO, (3) the race, ethnicity, gender, age and disability status for each student involved in such investigation or behavioral intervention, (4) the reason for and nature of such investigation or behavioral intervention, (5) the disposition of such investigation or behavioral intervention, and (6) whether any student involved in such investigation or behavioral intervention was (a) searched, (b) apprised of such student's constitutional rights, (c) issued a citation or a summons, (d) arrested, or (e) detained, including the amount of time such student was detained. The SRO shall not include student names and shall submit this information using the form attached to this Agreement as Appendix A.

For purposes of this section, the School District will provide the SRO with only as much student demographic information as is necessary for the limited purpose of complying with state reporting requirements as reflected in Appendix A, in accordance with applicable law. The SRO shall not redisclose this information for any purpose other than sharing the information with the Chief of Police, as required by statute.

The Chief of Police shall submit such reports to the Superintendent of Schools monthly.

### **XIII. Dismissal of a School Resource Officer**

In the event the Superintendent feels that the SRO is not effectively performing the SRO's duties and responsibilities, the Superintendent shall notify the Department. A meeting shall be conducted with the SRO to mediate or resolve any problems. The Department may dismiss or reassign the SRO if necessary. The Superintendent may decline the assignment of an SRO to any school in the School District.

The Department and the School District agree to provide their employees with training relative to this Agreement and its purposes. The parties agree to maintain regular and open communication to evaluate the effectiveness of this Agreement and suggest improvement or adjustments that may be necessary.

### **XIV. Term of Agreement**

The term of this agreement shall be one (1) year from the date of execution. Notwithstanding, this Agreement may be terminated by both parties at any time by mutual

written agreement, or by either party by providing written notice of termination to the other party by January 1<sup>st</sup> of any year, with such termination to be effective the following July 1<sup>st</sup>.

This Agreement constitutes a final written expression of all terms of this Agreement and is a complete and exclusive statement of those terms. This Agreement may be modified in writing by consent of both parties.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties have caused this Agreement to be signed by their authorized officers.

Signed, sealed, and delivered in the presence of:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Superintendent  
New Haven Public Schools

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chief of Police  
New Haven Police Department

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

DRAFT

**APPENDIX A**

**New Haven Public Schools  
School Resource Officer (SRO) Report on Investigations and Behavioral Interventions**

*This form must be completed and provided to the New Haven Chief of Police within five (5) school days of conducting an investigation and/or behavioral intervention of 1) challenging behavior **that escalates to violence or constitutes a crime**, or 2) conflict **that escalates to violence or constitutes a crime**.*

*“Challenging behavior” means behavior that negatively impacts school climate or interferes, or is at risk of interfering, with the learning or safety of a student or the safety of a school employee.*

*"Investigation or behavioral intervention" means a circumstance in which a school resource officer is conducting (i) a fact-finding inquiry concerning student behavior or school safety, including, but not limited to, emergency circumstances, or (ii) an intervention to resolve violent or nonviolent student behavior or conflicts.*

***As noted above, the SRO must only report investigations and/or behavioral interventions of behavior and conflict that escalate to violence or constitute a crime.***

**Name of School Resource Officer:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Badge Number:** \_\_\_\_\_ **School Affiliation:** \_\_\_\_\_

*Investigation and/or Behavioral Intervention Information:*

**Date of Investigation/Intervention:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Time of Investigation/Intervention:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Location of Incident:** \_\_\_\_\_

**The reason for and nature of such investigation and/or behavioral intervention:**  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**The disposition of such investigation or behavioral intervention (check all that apply):**

- Referral to administration for possible discipline
- Restorative practices implemented
- Peer mediation
- Referral to student support services

- Citation or summons issued
- Arrest of student(s)
- Search of student(s) by the SRO
- Management of crisis or emergency
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Please fill out the following section for each student involved in the investigation and/or behavioral intervention. **Do not include student names.** Identify additional students, if applicable, as “Student B,” “Student C,” etc. Demographic information for each student will be collected by the District from the school’s information system and shared with the SRO for the limited purpose of complying with state reporting requirements.

	Age	Gender	Race/Ethnicity (check all that apply)	Does the student have a known disability?	During the investigation and/or behavioral intervention, was the student....
<b>Student A</b>	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> Non-binary	<input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic or Latino <input type="checkbox"/> White <input type="checkbox"/> Black or African American <input type="checkbox"/> Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander <input type="checkbox"/> Asian <input type="checkbox"/> American Indian or Alaska Native	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Searched by the SRO <input type="checkbox"/> Apprised of constitutional rights <input type="checkbox"/> Issued a citation or a summons <input type="checkbox"/> Arrested <input type="checkbox"/> Detained <sup>1</sup> (if detained, note how long the student was detained: _____)
<i>Insert additional rows for Students B, C, D, as applicable</i>					

<sup>1</sup> Detained, for the purposes of this form, means detained by the SRO as a law enforcement action or placed under the direct supervision of the SRO by a responsible administrator.

**This report was completed on:** \_\_\_\_\_.

**By signing below, I certify that the information I have provided in this report is true and accurate to the best of my ability and recollection. I have not maintained a copy of this report and I understand that the information set forth herein is confidential and may not be redisclosed except in accordance with state and federal law.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
School Resource Officer

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**I, the New Haven Police Department Chief of Police, received this report on:**  
\_\_\_\_\_. **I understand that the information set forth herein is confidential and may not be redisclosed except in accordance with state and federal law.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

cc: Superintendent of Schools





***New Haven School Security Taskforce***  
***FINAL REPORT***  
***To The***  
***New Haven Board of Education***  
***New Haven Public Schools***

***Prepared by:***

***Dr. Carlos Torre, Professor of Education Southern CT State University***  
***Michael Pavano, Teacher and Union Steward at Riverside Academy***  
***Edith Johnson, Principal of Wilbur L. Cross High School***  
***Omena McCoy, Office of Mayor Justin Elicker***  
***\*Carolyn Ross-Lee, Former NHPS District Title IX Coordinator***  
***Lihame Arouna, Student Member of the Board & Coop High School Student***  
***Dr. Paul Whyte, New Haven Public Schools Assistant Superintendent***

***February 19, 2021***

## **Members of the Committee**

**Dr. Carlos Torre**, Committee Chair; Professor at Southern Connecticut State University

**Dr. Paul Whyte**, Committee Co-Chair, Assistant Superintendent

**Cameo Thorne**, Committee Co-Chair, Project Director for NHFT Restorative Practices Program

**Michael Pavano**, Committee Co-Chair, NHPS Teacher and Union Steward at Riverside Academy

**Lihame Arouna**, Student member of the Board of Education & Coop High School student

**Carolyn Ross-Lee**, District School Climate Coordinator, Assessment and Research

**Edith Johnson**, Principal of Wilbur L. Cross High School

**Addys Castillo**, Executive Director of City-Wide Youth Coalition

**Omena McCoy**, Office of Mayor Justin Elicker

**Michelle Cabaldon**, High School in the Community

**Maciel Filpo**, Social Worker

**Nancy Hill**, Social Worker, Cross High School

**Alfred Meadows**, Teacher and Union Steward at Wilbur L. Cross High School

**Derek Stephenson**, Principal of Riverside Academy

**Acting Chief Renee Dominguez**, New Haven Police Department

**Assistant Chief Karl Jacobson**, New Haven Police Department

**Sergeant Ronald Ferrante**, School Resource Officer Supervisor

**Stephen Ciarcia**, Assistant Principal of Career High School

**Daniel Bonet-Ojeda**, Principal on Special Assignment: Hillhouse High School

**Jene Flores**, Dropout Prevention Specialist/Truancy Officer

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Purpose of Committee:**

*In the wake of the death of George Floyd, cities across the country erupted into a series of protests calling for the U.S. to wrestle with its complacency and utter silence regarding systemic racism, police brutality and racial injustice. Cities here in Connecticut, including New Haven joined that call, unapologetically challenging the lack of accountability for law enforcement officials who err on the wrong side of justice, furthering the perpetuation of injustice that predominantly plagues Black communities. On June 5th, 2020 New Haven's Citywide Youth Coalition and Black Lives Matter organized and led a march for racial justice that drew 5,000 people. As part of their call to action, the Coalition presented a list of demands, one being the disinvestment of School Resource Officers (SROs) from New Haven Public Schools. In addition, the Coalition asked that the disinvestment and termination of contracts for SROs be followed through with an investment in school counselors.*

*Per the request of New Haven Board of Education student representative Lihame Arouna, Board of Education President, Ms. Yesenia Rivera, appointed a School Security Design Committee, with additional nominations from Governance Committee Co-Chair, Dr. Tamiko Jackson-MacArthur, Superintendent Dr. Iline Tracey, and Police Chief Otoniel Reyes. Chaired by Dr. Carlos Torre, Professor of Education at Southern Connecticut State University and former Board of Education member, the Committee was composed of community members, school administrators, teachers, and members of the New Haven Police Department (NHPD). The Committee was charged with holding a series of meetings to deliberate whether or not the district's SRO program should be dissolved. In their meetings, the Committee examined the role of SROs in New Haven Public Schools, reviewed a plethora of articles, videos and reports (national, state, and local), engaged stakeholders, consulted pending legislation regarding SROs (state and federal), all for the purpose of making a sound decision about whether or not New Haven Public Schools should continue its utilization of the SRO program.*

*In this report, the School Security Design Committee highlights it's process and outlines its reasoning for recommending that the New Haven Public Schools continue its relationship with School Resources Officers, albeit, with a number of major transformations.*

### **Overview**

*The School Security Design Committee met bi-weekly from September 17th, 2020 until January 21, 2021. Its efforts included: reviewing data from New Haven Public Schools (NHPS) and the New Haven Police Department (NHPD); administering a public survey (1,624 responses); hosting a public forum (approx. 200 participants & 24 testimonials); disseminating, reviewing, and deliberating on twenty-eight (28) articles, studies; videos, a podcast, and the like; and inviting four recognized professionals (in the fields of Education, Security, and Social Policy and the Legislative process) to present their professional perspectives to the committee (see "Findings", below for more specific details). The examination of this wide variety of pertinent sources allowed for a deeper understanding of the intricate complexity regarding the question of SROs in the public schools and of how these issues apply, specifically, to the needs of the New Haven Public Schools, though our needs may not, exactly, reflect those in other parts of the country.*

## **Main Activities:**

- Bi-weekly meetings.
- Public Forum titled: “New Haven School Security Taskforce Public Forum.”
- Review of Department of Justice School Resource Officer established guidelines.
- Three sample MOUs for overall comprehension of the issues involved in such an undertaking.
  1. Memorandum of agreement between the New Haven Department of Police Service, New Haven Family Alliance, Inc. & Community Mediation, Inc.
  2. Memorandum of agreement by and between New Haven Public Schools and New Haven Police Department.
  3. Memorandum of understanding between the Fauquier County Sheriff's Office and the Fauquier County School Board.
- Senator Christopher Murphy Fact Sheet -The Counseling Not Criminalization in Schools Act.
- State Statute for School Resource Officers. SROs statute CGS § 10-233m.
- Feedback results from the two SRO surveys.
- School Security Redesign Data - New Haven Police School Arrest Data.
- School Security Redesign Data - NHPS Arrest Data 2014-15-2019-20

## **Articles**

1. [The Prevalence and the Price of Police in Schools.](#) (UConn NEAG School of Education).
2. [Warrior vs. Guardian a Paradigm Shift in Youth Policing.](#) (Tow Youth Justice Institute)<sup>1</sup>.
3. [A Guide to Developing, Maintaining, and Succeeding with your School Resource Officer Program.](#) (U.S. Department of Justice).
4. [School Cops: Few Arrests? Too Many Calls?](#) (New Haven Independent).
5. [Forum Call- Boot Cops From Schools.](#) (New Haven Independent).
6. [Consensus: Reform, don't abolish SROs.](#) (New Haven Independent).
7. [New Haven Public Schools Arrest Data 2014-15 to 2019-20.](#) (NHPS).
8. [SRO Supervisor Sal Torelli, Notes From Discussion.](#) (Fauquier County Schools).

## **Videos**

1. [The School-To-Prison Pipeline Debate: SROs & Why Student Arrests Are Increasing.](#) (Rogue Rocket).
2. [Police Release Body Cam Video Showing SRO Handcuffing Student.](#) (WFMY News 2).
3. [School Resource Officers.](#) (Sioux Falls Schools).
4. [The difference Between a street Cop and an SRO and the benefits.](#) (Mylifemypower).
5. [Controversial video raises questions about role of school resource officers.](#) (Sinclair Broadcast Group).
6. [A day-in-the-life of a Boise police school resource officer!](#) (Boise Police Department).

## • **Podcast**

1. [Why there's a push to get police out of schools.](#) (National Public Radio).

## • **Presentations by:**

1. Otoniel Reyes, New Haven Police Chief.
2. Sal Torelli, School Security Officer Lead Supervisor, Fauquier County Public Schools. Retired SRO Supervisor, Fauquier County Sheriff's Office.
3. Michael Nast, Educational Alliance (Brown University) and the Center for Education Redesign, at the NEAG School of Education (University of Connecticut). Former member of the New Haven Board of Education for 12 years (2006 – 2018).

## • **Interviews**

1. Gary Winfield, [Connecticut State Senate](#) since 2014. From 2009 to 2014 he served as a [State Representative](#) and as Deputy Majority Leader. Interviewed by Dr. Torre.
2. Sal Torelli, School Security Officer Lead Supervisor, Fauquier County Public Schools. Interviewed by Mr. Michael Pavano.

## **FINDINGS**

To identify whether New Haven's SRO program supports our students, effectively, this committee compiled a diverse selection of information to disseminate, review, and deliberate through professional discourse.

### **School Arrest Data**

Using School Security Redesign Data from both the New Haven Public Schools (NHPS) and the New Haven Police Department (NHPD), we identified a total of 230 student arrests from 2014-2020. Of those arrests, 147 were for battery/assault (48), fighting (39), physical altercation (16), weapon only (24), and threat of violence (20). Drugs / alcohol / tobacco (37) arrests were also one of the highest figures. The remaining 34 arrests were spread across 22 other categories including bomb threats, robbery, sexual offenses, disorderly conduct, inciting a fight/riot, harassment, and other serious school code violations. Of note, between the 2014-2020 school years, there was one arrest for skipping class and one arrest for insubordination/disrespect. According to assistant police chief Jacobson, these two arrests were made in order to refer the student to the Juvenile Review Board (JRB)<sup>2</sup> rather than introducing them to the criminal justice system. In 2014, Black and Latino/Hispanic males faced the most arrests, with a 4-1 arrest rate of black males. By 2020, arrest rates were uniform between Black and Latino/Hispanic students. Female arrest rates began with 1 in the 2014 school year; however, by 2020, females comprised almost half of the students arrested, identifying a marked increase. We have no data regarding the race of females. It is important to note that the majority of the NHPS student population of 20,043 is composed of minorities. The racial breakdown includes 47% Hispanics/Latinos (9,484), 37% Black/African-American (7,073), 13% White (2,224), Asian (536), Native American (40), Pacific Islander (11), and two or more races (510).

### **The Surveys**

In the ten schools currently assigned an SRO, survey data captured both staff and students' perception of SROs, yielding 1,044 responses. Of respondents, 84.3% were students, 15.7% were NHPS school employees. After these results were examined, further discussion established the need to expand the survey and its reach.

The second survey included identifying respondent's race, including parents, and encompassing all New Haven Public Schools. In this survey, a total of 580 responses were received. Respondents were 96.3% parents, 2.6% students, 1.1% NHPS school employees, and included representation from 41 schools. Respondent's race consisted of 38.3 % Whites (210 ppl.), 30.1 % Hispanic or Latino (165 ppl.), 28.6% Black or African American (157 ppl.), 2.7% Asian (15 ppl.), .01% American Indian or Alaskan Native (1 person), and .01% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (1 person). Thirty-one participants did not self-identify. It is unknown whether they chose not to identify their race due to there being no appropriate race classification from which to choose.

Through the use of both surveys, we received a combined total of 1,624 responses from parents, students, and NHPS staff. Of the total respondents, 34.2% were parents, 55.3% were students, and 10.5% were NHPS staff. There were 17 people who did not self-identify whether they belonged to either one of the three groups.

A Likert Scale was utilized with a range from 1 to 5:

1 = Strong "NO"; 2 = "NO"; 3 = "NEUTRAL"; 4 = "YES"; and 5 = Strong "YES"

**In response to survey questions:**

**“Do you think it is necessary to have an SRO assigned to a school?”**

Survey #1 Student/ staff (1,037 responses)

60.2% (624) YES to strong YES.

28.2% (292) remained NEUTRAL.

11.7% (121) NO or strong NO.

Survey #2 Parent/Student/ staff (567 responses)

66.7% (378) YES to strong YES.

9.5% (54) remained NEUTRAL.

23.8% (135) NO or strong NO.

**“Do you think SRO’s should be removed from schools?”**

Survey #1 Student/ staff (1,033 responses)

67.2% (694) NO or strong NO.

22.7% (234) remained NEUTRAL.

10.1% (105) YES to strong YES.

Survey #2 Parent/Student/ staff (566 responses)

66.8% (378) NO or strong NO.

9.9% (56) remained NEUTRAL.

23.3% (132) YES to strong YES.

**“Have you ever been in a meeting, place, or situation in which an SRO was needed?”**

Survey #1 Student/ staff (1,034 responses)

32% (331) – Yes            68% (703) - No

Survey #2 Parent/Student/ staff (564 responses)

26.1% (147) - Yes            73.9% (417) - No

*The first significant finding from this survey is that one-third of our students found themselves in a situation where an SRO was needed while attending our schools. Even more revealing is that one-quarter of our parents, while at our schools, found themselves in a similar situation. Thus, highlighting the importance of making our learning environments as conducive as possible. The high percentage of situations needing an SRO in which our parents and students found themselves, testifies to the need of not removing SROs, abruptly, from our schools. Rather, it sheds light on the need for their continued presence on school campuses. Further, the high number of incidents requiring the presence of SROs, compared to the low number of arrests, demonstrates the use of multiple strategies to resolve conflict rather than entering a student into the criminal justice system. The use of effective strategies utilized further strengthened our decision to maintain SROs for the foreseeable future.*

*The second significant finding from both surveys was in response to the question, “What do you believe is the role of a police officer placed in the school?” All responses provided were from a personal point of view. Positive Responses varied from enforcing the laws, providing safety and security, an extra person for students to talk to, and inspiring children. Negative responses encompassed the beliefs of “criminalizing children,” “harming the black community,” “adding fear into schools,” and providing a “force of control and imminent violence towards students.” These varied responses identify a complete absence of clear and concise communication and education regarding the mission, vision, and role of an SRO in the New Haven Public Schools.*



## **The Public Forum**

*The New Haven School Security Task Force Public School Forum was held, virtually, on November 24, 2020. Of the approximately 200 participants in attendance, 24 actually gave testimony, mostly, against the need for SROs. Participant testimony consistently referred to the school to prison pipeline as a reason for opposing the SRO program. Regardless of whether the contributors were for or against the SRO program, none wished for the program to continue in its current form.*

## **State and Local Data**

*State and local data has identified grave concerns regarding the school to prison pipeline. The committee also considered this evidence. However, NHPS statistics do not align with Connecticut state data. According to the most recent data from the National Center for Education Statistics, during the 2017-2018 school year, 58% of public schools in the US had either school resource officers (SROs) or other sworn law enforcement officers. New Haven has 30%. Further, the CT Post (18 Sept. 2020) reports that during the 2017 and 2018 school years, Waterbury (18,847 student population) had 222 and 287 arrests, respectively ("18 percent of the arrests made statewide"). In contrast, during this same period, New Haven had 30 and 35 arrests, respectively.*

*From 2017-2018, neighboring school districts were found to have the following number of arrests: 209 in New Britain; 175 in Danbury; and 88 in Norwich Academy. The CT Post reports that "Elsewhere last year (2019), the numbers varied. In southwestern Connecticut, there were 92 in Danbury, 41 in Ansonia, 36 in Stamford, 35 in New Haven, 33 in Stratford, 28 in Norwalk, and 16 in Greenwich." In the last school year, Bridgeport had 12, a number that Bridgeport Police Lt. Paul Grech questioned.*

*According to NHPD statistics from 2015 through 2019, on average there were approximately 1,254 calls per year for service city-wide from school locations. It must be noted that not all of these calls are school-related. Given NHPD practices, a school's address may be used as a reference point when any incident occurs in a nearby location. Thus, it would appear to be data affecting the school directly. Notwithstanding, on average, SROs may have responded to an average of 801 calls for service, per year, between 2014-15 and 2018-19 school years (full-year data sets for the 2019-20 school year are smaller because they represent the 6, or so months before the pandemic shutdown).*

*In line with NHPS school data, there were 51 and 53 arrests, respectively, in the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 school years. In contrast, arrests of students from the 2016-2017 - 2019-2020 school years identified a low of 26 and a high of 35, respectively. Thus, there was a 39.4% decrease in arrests between the school years 2015-2016 and 2016-2017. Even after this decrease in arrests, the City of New Haven has averaged an approximate 3% arrest rate (Number of calls versus number of arrests) since the 2016-17 school year. This arrest rate identifies New Haven as an outlier, thus, as noted previously, we do not align with Connecticut statistics.*

*Despite the fact that there was no clear data presented as to why the arrest rate changed so dramatically in a downward fashion, it would be in our best interest to continue exploring further positive measures to reduce these numbers. In relation to calls to police, 98% of the calls were dealt with effectively by an SRO without an arrest. Generally, this may be attributed to diversionary measures and meaningful work to remedy transgressions outside of the criminal justice system. In this way, such situations can serve as teachable moments that help our students acquire indispensable diplomatic and non-violent conflict resolution skills. Therefore, we make several recommendations below that we believe will further reduce our student arrest rates within our public school system.*

Additionally, results of the two data surveys identified that approximately two-thirds of parents, students, and NHPS staff believe it necessary to have a School Resource Officer (SRO) in the schools, and they should not be removed. These responses are meaningful because students were 84.3% of respondents in the first survey while parents were 96.3% of the second. The troubling result identified almost 32% of students and 26% of parents found themselves in a situation in which an SRO was considered necessary while on school grounds. A final meaningful result from the data survey identified an overall lack of understanding as to the role and responsibilities of the SRO in the school environment. Ultimately, data and survey responses provided insights that did not align with national statistics nor the larger narrative throughout the city regarding the immediacy to remove SROs from NHPS.

Finally, A vital concern identified for this Committee by the police department is that removing SROs from the schools results in a loss of student/police relationships. Results would include patrol officers responding to schools without any knowledge of its student populations and, most probably, making arrests rather than de-escalating situations and using other remedies to resolve conflict. Foreseeably, this could increase our students' arrest rates and decrease the consideration or use of other more conciliatory approaches to student conflict in our schools.

### **Distinguished Guest Testimonies**

- *Mr. Michael Nast graduated from New Haven Public Schools. He was an NHPS teacher, principal, and sat on the New Haven Board of Education. Mr. Nast was also Superintendent in several Connecticut school districts. Currently, he is with the Educational Alliance (Brown University) and the Center for Education Redesign, at the NEAG School of Education (University of Connecticut).*
- *New Haven Police Chief Otoniel Reyes was born and raised in New Haven. He is a 21-year veteran who started in patrol before working his way up the ranks to Chief. He has extensive training in criminal investigations, leadership development, critical incident management, labor relations, media relations, and policy development. Chief Reyes attended the prestigious FBI National Academy and the Senior Management Institute for Police.*
- *Mr. Sal Torelli is a retired Fauquier County, VA Sheriff with 30 years of law enforcement experience. He spent 14 years as a supervisor of the School Resource Unit and SRO. He is currently an armed school security officer at Fauquier High School. In addition to his in-person testimony to the Committee, Mr. Torelli was interviewed by Committee Member Michael Pavano. This interview is available in the “References” section, below.*

### **Interviews**

- *State Senator Gary Winfield was interviewed by Committee Chair Carlos Torre. Senator Winfield has served in the [Connecticut State Senate](#) since 2014. From 2009 to 2014 he served as a [State Representative](#) and as Deputy Majority Leader. Senator Winfield was the lead sponsor of a bill to abolish the death penalty in Connecticut. He sponsored a bill to put in place protections for Transgender citizens in public accommodation. Senator Winfield, further, was the force behind the [TRUST ACT](#) (the first statewide passage of such a bill in the country), several police accountability bills, the first in the nation [racial and ethnic impact statement on demand](#) without restrictions, and prosecutorial transparency bill along with several other progressive wins. Currently, he is proposing a bill which would eliminate SROs. Senator Winfield commented that New Haven’s efforts to address*

*the issues surrounding SROs in New Haven schools, would become part of the State-Wide conversation as his proposed bill progresses in the State Senate.*

- *Sal Torelli, School Security Officer Lead Supervisor, Fauquier County Public Schools. Interviewed by Mr. Michael Pavano. (see additional background in the section titled: “Expert Testimonies”, above).*

*All distinguished specialists voiced their appreciation for and concerns regarding the SRO program. Individually, they recognized three areas requiring attention:*

- a. The need to have appropriate personnel in place with proper training and effective policies guiding their actions;*
- b. That the key to an effective program is the quality of the relationships developed with students, staff, and the community; and*
- c. That the world in which we live, currently, requires an increase of individual human vigilance, the building of caring relationships, support personnel, in order to effectively address and respond to ever increasing delinquency, mental health issues, violence, and societal trauma.*

*In the process of our deliberations, the following issues also emerged:*

- 1. The Budget for school resource officers does not come from the NHBOE budget or the federal budget.*
- 2. Eliminating the SROs does not free up money to hire more social workers, school psychologists, or counselors.*
- 3. New Haven has Limited financial resources to ensure that adequate mental health supports are available for students in need.*

### **The Committee’s Process**

*Committee activities involved professional discourse, including discussing the relevant articles, videos, and a podcast that were made available. The activities encompassed various media, current research from the TOW Youth Justice Institute, available data, and an opportunity to understand how a different area of the country, Fauquier County, VA, employed their SRO model. All information presented provided an opportunity to understand the SRO question from multiple perspectives to ensure an informed outcome.*

*An analysis of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between NHPS and the NHPD revealed this agreement had not been updated since May 2011. Similarly, the MOU for the Juvenile Review Board has not been revised since June 2007. Mr. Torelli provided a copy of the MOU between the Fauquier County Sheriff’s Office and The Fauquier County School Board for review. The Fauquier County MOU provided not only recent language for an adequately updated MOU, but this document was also founded in the recommended protocols established by the Department of Justice’s A Guide to Developing, Maintaining, and Succeeding with Your School Resource Officer Program. (n.d.).*

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

*In summary, this Committee accepted the charge of determining whether the SRO program should be dissolved or continue its partnership with the New Haven Public Schools. Members are deeply aware of the impact of systemic racism, the school to prison pipeline, and the significance of racial injustice, which initially called for the SRO program review. The last five months of professional discourse amongst ourselves and stakeholders have revealed that not a single person wishes for the SRO program to continue in its current design. Similar to everyone interviewed in the process of information gathering and everyone who testified at the public forum, all but one of the committee's members agreed that the SRO program should not continue to function in the same way it had functioned previously. The one contrasting member was opposed, vigorously, to maintaining the program in any form. The remaining members favored having NHPS continue its relationship with the New Haven Police Department and keep SROs in school buildings until a number of adoptions for transformation of the SRO program can be implemented.*

*After much listening, discussion, and review of the information referenced in this report, it became clear that the indispensable requirement for NHPS students is to develop emotionally, socially, and academically effective schools; with a deep-seated commitment to building a more just, generative, peaceful and conducive learning environment. Thus, New Haven and other public school districts' responsibility is to protect and provide for the social-emotional needs of our children, as well as safeguard their physical well-being, as a way of allowing them to learn and engage cooperatively with their studies. The survey data suggests that students, parents and staff equate the presence of SRO's with safety and security.*

*Those who hold opposing views have articulated that the presence of SRO's equates to policing, harassment and victimization that they have either encountered personally or in some way or another, have been impacted, negatively. There is no doubt that many of our students have been forced to wrestle with racialized trauma, inflicted upon them and others who look like them, by those in uniform. The district needs to commit itself to affirming this trauma. **Thus, we recommend, urgently, that the New Haven Board of Education consider a strategy through which the district explores all means to increase the number of school psychologists, school social workers, counselors, and other such support personnel, as a way of phasing out the SRO program.***

Accordingly, the Committee proposes that the Board consider the following actions:

1. Identify how [S. 4360, Counseling Not Criminalization in Schools Act](#), introduced by Senators Chris Murphy (D-CT) and Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), can aid in acquiring funding to hire counselors, social workers, school psychologists, and other support personnel. This legislation would prohibit the use of federal funds for maintaining police in schools. However, it does not ban or remove police from schools. Federal funding for school safety has many uses that do not include maintaining police. This legislation would divert any existing federal funding for school safety to these other uses. ... (and) would help districts ... by establishing a \$2.5 billion grant program to hire the counselors, social workers, nurses, school psychologists, and other personnel they need to support students and create safe schools without police. The grant program would also support school-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports, as well as trauma-informed services and professional development.
2. Identify additional funding sources to secure additional social workers, trauma counselors, and social-emotional support partners to support our students.
3. Allocate additional supplemental funds to fortify the work of, current, social workers, trauma counselors, and social-emotional support partners as they sustain our students.

4. *Conduct a thorough review and implementation of policies and procedures identified by the Department of Justice's A Guide to Developing, Maintaining, and Succeeding with Your School Resource Officer Program. Practices from the Field of Law Enforcement and School Administration. This should include recruiting, screening, training, retraining, and supervising SROs.*
5. *Articulate clearly, the role and responsibility of an SRO in the school environment.*
6. *Ensure SROs have a seat on each school's administrative/management team to become an integral part of the building's climate.*
7. *Identify, clarify, and present to students and their families how an SRO adds value to the school community.*
8. *Require schools to give SRO presentations to staff and students regarding areas of safety for educational purposes (e.g., domestic violence, harassment, appropriate social media use).*
9. *Consider mandating that SRO, School Security, and NHPS schools' Administrative Team hold daily/weekly meetings (debriefings) to update and communicate issues/incidents occurring in the city that affects our students.*
10. *Mandating that SROs be called to intervene with students only for serious emergencies (including identification of what constitutes a serious emergency).*
11. *Establishing formalized mentorship programs between SROs and students in the specific buildings where SROs are assigned.*
12. *Identify appropriate clothing for SROs to wear other than the standard police uniform.*
13. *Require that, for routine visits, police cars be parked in a school's employee parking lot and not in front of school buildings to reduce visibility to the public and potential apprehensions on the part of children and parents.*
14. *Update the Memorandum of Understanding between the New Haven Public Schools and New Haven Police Department to comply with the above considerations, as well as meet new requirements identified by the State of Connecticut and the Department of Justice protocols.*

### **Closing Thoughts**

*We would like to thank the Board of Education for the opportunity to work on this most crucial issue. We trust that it will contribute to the future safety and continued student engagement in the New Haven Public Schools.*



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<sup>1</sup> The Tow Youth Justice Institute is the only organization in the State of Connecticut and one of a few organizations in the nation that is solely dedicated to youth justice issues based on a comprehensive, multi-disciplinary, research-driven model to address this important subject. It is an academic-based institute (Henry C. Lee College of Criminal Justice and Forensic Sciences; University of New Haven) dedicated to the training and education of state and local officials, policy-makers, and future leaders. It is designed to promote, monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of evidence-based practices, programs and policies related to youth justice, focusing on the needs of youth up to the age of 21.

<sup>2</sup> Juvenile review Boards (JRBs) are diversionary and prevention programs designed to help local police departments deal with juvenile offenders. They are usually composed of representatives of local youth service agencies, police departments, and the juvenile court. <https://www.cga.ct.gov/PS94/rpt/olr/htm/94-R-0908.htm>