

RESOLUTION SUPPORTING EQUITY IN SCHOOL CLIMATE AND DISCIPLINE AND ENDING THE USE OF SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS

Portland Public Schools

WHEREAS, on May 25, 2020, a white police officer in Minneapolis knelt on the neck of a Black man, George Floyd, for nearly nine minutes, killing him, while other officers helped and watched;

WHEREAS, the police shoot and kill roughly 1,000 people nationally every year, and Black people and other people of color are disproportionately the victims.[1] Black Americans are three times more likely than white Americans to be shot and killed by police[2];

WHEREAS, David Okot, a 26-year-old Black immigrant, was shot and killed by Portland police in 2009;

WHEREAS, Chance Baker, a 22-year-old Black man, was shot and killed by the Portland police in 2017;

WHEREAS, Isahak Muse, 22-year-old Black immigrant and a graduate of Deering High School, was shot and killed in 2019 by a young white man who had interned with the Portland Police Department and was arrested, subsequently released, and re-arrested and charged as a response to community demands for accountability;

WHEREAS, Black lives matter.

WHEREAS, police brutality and the over-policing of communities of Black, indigenous, and other people of color (BIPOC) nationwide have inflicted deep trauma in those communities, including among children, who then carry that trauma with them at school;

WHEREAS, students, teachers, and school staff deserve safe, quality schools that enable students to thrive, which cannot be accomplished through school policing, with its entrenched stereotypes and racism;

WHEREAS, research does not show that School Resource Officers (SROs) improve real or perceived school safety[3,4];

WHEREAS, research finds that Maine students report feeling intimidated by police in their schools, and that while Maine students feel some reassurance that there is someone there in case of an emergency, they do not believe that an SRO would keep them safe in an emergency[5];

WHEREAS, research finds that students have weaker relationships with their teachers in schools where security personnel are present[6];

WHEREAS, research finds that the presence of SROs in schools leads to an increase in out-of-school suspensions[7];

WHEREAS, research finds that the presence of SROs in schools leads to developmentally normal adolescent behaviors previously handled through school disciplinary channels increasingly labeled criminal, passing the responsibility for responding from the school to law enforcement[8];

WHEREAS, the increased use of SROs has coincided with a large increase in youth, especially BIPOC students and students with disabilities, being referred to the juvenile justice system for misdemeanor offenses, such as school fights and disorderly conduct[9];

WHEREAS, student contact with the criminal justice system, which increases when there's an officer at school, can have negative outcomes on school connectedness and educational attainment[10,11];

WHEREAS, the presence of SROs in schools poses a grave threat to students' right to privacy and that of their families;

WHEREAS, with the exception of Deering High, Black students in Portland's middle schools and high schools are suspended at disproportionate rates;

WHEREAS, the Portland Promise commits us to goals of equity and the whole student;.

WHEREAS, school policing is costly, and Portland Public Schools is far below recommended ratios of student support professionals to the student body for school counselors, social workers, and psychologists;

WHEREAS, on June 9, 2020, Black Lives Matter Portland called for the removal of police from school budgets;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Portland Board of Education directs the Superintendent not to renew the district's Memorandum of Understanding with the Portland Police Department;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Superintendent use funds saved by the elimination of the SRO program to further the district's unfunded equity priorities;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that teachers, administrators, and staff are prohibited from calling the police to intervene unless a student's behavior poses real and immediate risk of serious physical harm; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Superintendent must implement an action plan to eliminate race-based disparities in the use of disciplinary referrals, in the severity of punishments, and in the impact of disciplinary action on students and must provide regular updates on discipline data to the Board of Education.

Citations:

1. "Protests spread over police shootings. Police promised reforms. Every year, they still shoot and kill nearly 1,000 people." *The Washington Post*, June 8, 2020.
2. <https://mappingpoliceviolence.org/>
3. Theriot, M. & Orme, J.G. (2016). School resource officers and students' feelings of safety at school. *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice*, 14 (2), 130-146.
4. Lacoë, J. (2015). Unequally safe: The race gap in school safety. *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice*, 13, 143-168.
5. Layton, D. (2019). "They're just, like, there": Student Experiences with School Resource Officers. USM.
6. Fisher B.W., Gardella J.H., & Tanner-Smith E.E. (2019). Social Control in Schools: The Relationships between School Security Measures and Informal Social Control Mechanisms. *Journal of School Violence*, 18:3, 347-361.
7. Petteruti, A. (2011). Education under arrest: The case against police in schools. Justice Policy Institute.
8. Ibid.
9. Theriot, M. (2009). School resource officers and the criminalization of student behavior. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 37, 280-287.
10. Hernandez, V. (2017). Students, not suspects: The need to reform school policing in Washington State. ACLU.
11. Sweeten, G. (2006). Who will graduate? Disruption of high school education by arrest and court involvement. *Justice Quarterly*, 23 (4), 462-480.