

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

May 26, 2009

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Schmidt, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Improving Student Achievement Through a Partnership with Edmonton Police Services – School Resource Officer Program

ORIGINATOR: J. Bidulock, Assistant Superintendent

RESOURCE
STAFF: Debbie Jackson, Lesley Sonnen, Corrie Ziegler

INFORMATION

For 29 years, Edmonton Public Schools and Edmonton Police Services have engaged in a successful partnership to meet community needs, and instill in students the attributes of citizenship and good character that ultimately results in student success. By working proactively with school administrators, staff, students, parents and the community, School Resource Officers (SROs) support the creation of safe and caring learning environments.

In 1979 Edmonton Public School Board (EPSB) entered into a unique partnership with the Edmonton Police Service (EPS) and Edmonton Catholic Schools (ECS). This partnership was created in response to a need for police presence in high schools as identified and supported by the executive of the EPSB, EPS, ECS, the Edmonton Police Commission and Edmonton City Council. This community based initiative was developed even further in 1984 by a cost sharing agreement that equally divided the cost of the SRO program. Uniformed Edmonton police officers are specifically assigned to a school or group of schools, between the respective School Board and the Edmonton Police Service. Over the past 29 years, the role of the SRO has evolved; officers have become integrated into their respective school communities and work alongside school staff as solution-focused, decision-making partners in the service of student success. During the 2009-10 school year, twelve SROs have been placed in thirteen Edmonton Public high schools.

On a daily basis, SROs provide a visible presence in their assigned school and the community. These officers have become integrated into the life of the school and are a valued member of the school's administrative team. They collaborate with school staffs to assist in setting and determining school policies, enforcement practices, discipline rules, safe school planning, as well as assisting in counseling, mediations, and the directing of interagency referrals. The SRO role allows for EPS members to examine the "big" picture (youth, victim, school, courts, and community) without the "constraints" of traditional policing methods. SROs are able to seek out and administer alternative forms of resolution that allows for a long term positive impact on a teenager's life.

In addition to performing primary duties surrounding enforcement of law, crime prevention and detection, SROs contribute to a positive learning environment through counseling,

structured class presentations, continual interaction, mentoring and the distribution of educational resource materials. The SRO members are active participants in supporting portions of curriculum delivery and aspects of the education system that enhance social development. They assist in the development and presentation of lessons on a variety of topics based on the Alberta Program of Studies as well as the learning needs of a group or class. SROs further integrate themselves into the school environment by coaching athletic teams, leading extra-curricular clubs or youth groups on a volunteer basis.

Through formal and informal interactions with staff, students, parents and other community members, SROs build positive relationships within the school and larger community. They are not only seen as representatives of the police force, but as supportive adults – mentors, educators, coaches, and role models. These strong relationships provide the basis for building and maintaining a safe, caring learning environment that promotes student learning and success.