

From: [Los Altos Racial Equity](#)
To: [City Council](#)
Subject: City Council meeting 1/25 Agenda Item 8.1
Date: Sunday, January 23, 2022 2:35:41 PM

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Dear Mayor Ramirez, Vice Mayor Hicks and MV Councilmembers,

We are writing to you on behalf of LARE, Los Altos for Racial Equity, which works towards increasing diversity and equity in Los Altos and our surrounding communities. Many of our members have been in or have children in the MVLAUHSD school district. We have taken a look at the recommendations made by PSAB and City Staff that would update the MOU between the City and MVLAUHSD. We wanted to express our disappointment at these recommendations because we think they fall short of a solution that keeps in mind the experience of the 27% of students answering the survey who had negative experiences with the SRO and because we believe that there are better ways to achieve the goals of the program than through SROs.

As stated in the SRO Program Update, Table 3, the purpose/goals of the SRO program are

- 1) To create a safe and secure school environment
- 2) Prevention/reduction of juvenile delinquency
- 3) Reduction in referrals to criminal justice system & student suspensions and expulsions
- 4) Positive engagement & relationship between MVPD and students

Here we address each of these goals.

1. We know that a safe and secure school environment can be achieved with the cooperation of MVLAUHSD and the MVPD, without a specific SRO program. Police will always be called in case of emergency or life-threatening or violent situations on campus, whether or not there is an SRO program.

2&3. The office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (JJDP - an office of the of the USDOJ) "recommends that the following types of school and community prevention programs be employed:

- Classroom and behavior management programs
- Multi-component classroom-based programs
- Social competence promotion curriculums
- Conflict resolution and violence prevention curriculums
- Bullying prevention programs
- Afterschool recreation programs
- Mentoring programs

School organization programs

- Comprehensive community interventions" [1]

These programs can be run by teachers, coaches, staff, parents, and counselors, not just police officers. In fact, the Institute of Behavioral Science at U of Colorado, Boulder has a project called Blueprints for Healthy Youth Development which scientifically evaluates and certifies interventions that are effective. [2] One such intervention is LifeSkills Training (LST), which has been shown to be effective in reducing drug use, violence and delinquency [3]. Reducing those would be key in reducing the referrals into the criminal justice system and expulsions and suspensions. (Bonus: the LST program costs are calculated to be around \$16.75/student for 600 students or about \$10,000/year, much less than the budget for SROs)

We have been conditioned to think that the police are the right people to guide teens. We've heard from MVPD that many officers enjoy working with kids and teens and want to work with them, and that's fantastic. But surely many officers also love music or physical education (PE), and yet we would never replace our music teachers or PE teachers with police officers. Why is that? The fact is, they are not professionally trained to teach music or PE - that is why we choose professionals in those specific areas. Let's remember that they are not professionally trained to mentor kids either - that's why mental health professionals, teen therapists, guidance counselors, and even teachers and coaches are the right choice to be mentors and guides for our students, not armed police officers. In fact, we don't know how well our current MVPD programs with youth are working because we don't collect any data or conduct any research about them. In the current Staff Assessment of PSAB Recommendations 1D, although staff has recommended creating goals, there is no recommendation for public release of metrics, scientific evaluation of the program's effectiveness, or even a formal review.

4. The JJDP also has a literature review of research conducted on "Interactions between Youth & Law Enforcement" that gives an overview of the research into different types of interactions, including different policing programs such as PAL, Scouts, and SROs. Many studies looked at whether youth perceptions of police changed through these programs. Surprisingly, most studies found no or very small statistically significant improvement through these programs. [4]. Our view is that youth perceptions and engagement of/with police would improve when they see consistent civil and respectful interactions with police outside of school.

Through the extensive research that we have done, we have concluded that the recommended course of action by PSAB and City Staff fall short of what we desire for the children of our community. While we thank the PSAB for their work in trying to look at the effectiveness and attitudes toward the SRO program through surveys, we know this doesn't give the whole picture. In fact, we need to take a step back and work from a baseline of first figuring out the problem to be solved to then finding the best solution for the problem.

We are pushing for MV City Council to take a comprehensive look at other options available for achieving the goals of the SRO program. We understand that change is hard, but it can lead to profound gains for the students in our community.

If the MV City Council chooses to support the SRO program, we ask that you do the following

to mitigate harm to our students:

1. Continue to work with PSAB and the public to develop the YSU Procedure Manual in a transparent and open process.
2. Require the MVPD/MVLAUHSD/MVWSD to publicly release their metrics and present their performance with respect to achieving their goals and objectives yearly. This is key to measuring how successful the MVPD Youth programs are, and whether our tax dollars are being used effectively.

Thank you,

LARE Steering Committee on behalf of LARE

Renee Rashid

Salim Damerdji

Tanya Maluf

Toni Moos

[1] <https://youth.gov/youth-topics/juvenile-justice/prevention-and-early-intervention>

[2] <https://www.blueprintsprograms.org/>

[3] <https://www.blueprintsprograms.org/programs/5999999/lifeskills-training-1st/>

[4] <https://ojjdp.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh176/files/media/document/interactions-youth-law-enforcement.pdf>