

LIST OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

August 24, 2020 Board Meeting

TELEVISED COMMENT

School Resource Officers

- Elisa Tseng, ejtseng@yahoo.com

WRITTEN COMMENTS

Inclusion / Equity

- Haneen Ismaili, prohaneen@gmail.com
- Abby Hu, abbyhappyhu@gmail.com

COMMENTS SUBMITTED

TELEVISED COMMENT

School Resource Officers

- **Elisa Tseng, ejtseng@yahoo.com**

I am the mother of a high schooler in Redmond and am writing to express my wish for policing-free schools in our district. Specifically, I am asking the Board move to end the SRO system. I would like to see this done in the context of our entire LWSD community coming together to reimagine and rework our police departments' relationships with our schools. Patrolling police officers do not belong in our schools. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. spoke about what he considered the 3 evils in society; militarism, racism, and poverty. SRO systems operating are manifestation of two of these; militarism and racism.

Historically and ironically there has been a lack of education regarding the reality of policing in our schools. I myself had been unaware of the dark nature of SRO systems up until recently. I understand now there exists some misconceptions surrounding SRO programs. The first misconception is that SROs keep our kids safer at school - A 2018 study which reviewed 40 years of evaluations of school policing showed no positive impact on school safety outcomes. This research showed that SROs programs in our schools do not decrease general school crimes or decreases school shootings.

There also exists a widespread myth that students feel safer and less fearful at schools with SROs. A 2011 study of white and black students showed that overall school security measures which includes the presence of SROs generally increases students' fear and negatively impacts students' perceptions of safety. Black students were found to suffer the worst from these fears and they said that SROs not only make them feel less safe schools but the sight of one can triggers stress, fear, trauma and/or anxiety for them.

I now know that SRO systems constitute an on-going danger to our kids. A 2014 SRO study revealed that the presence of SROs leads to more expulsions and suspensions overall in schools; particularly for black students. Also, in a 3 year study of 13 schools with an SRO and 15 schools without an SRO, social scientists found that schools with the SROs had nearly five times the number of arrests.

Overall there is a heightened awareness in our community about the inherently punitive and racist nature of SRO programs. And now that our community knows better, we are doing better - there is already an online petition circulating in the community titled "No More Police in Lake Washington Schools".

I would like to see our school board adopt the hopeful example set by the Minneapolis, Portland and Denver school boards who have all recently decided to remove SRO

programs in their schools. Many citizens in Phoenix, New York and Chicago are also presently petitioning and lobbying their school members to do the same. Here, closer to home, Seattle and Edmonds school districts have also just voted to remove SRO systems in their schools. Northshore District citizens are currently circulating a petition to remove policing in their schools.

So what would a post-SRO school community look like? Toronto's example as a post-SRO school community is being viewed as model to follow for our American school districts. Toronto, which has the largest school district in Canada, removed SROs from all their schools in 2017 after having an SRO program for a decade. The removal of SROs happened after 15,000 students were surveyed and 2000 of the students reported that they felt intimidated, targeted or watched by SROs. And since the removal of the SRO system, the last few years has seen a drop in suspensions and expulsions in Toronto schools.

Under the new safety program at schools, the police department manages what are called "school engagement teams" which are made up of officers who are assigned to multiple schools. These officers work at building positive relationships with students, try and gather intelligence about what's going on in the schools, prevent crime. The big difference is the officers are not embedded in the schools.

Also, since the removal of the SROs, schools continue to rely on unarmed, school safety monitors to help with student behavior. Every high school has at least one safety monitor who walks hallways and school grounds, watches for intruders and resolves conflicts between students. Some monitors hired are already well known to the kids and are coaches or people who grew up in the community.

A wave of positive, revolutionary change is happening in school communities nationwide. It is our community's moment in time also to decide if we want to uphold an inherently militant, oppressive, racist system or transform the SRO system into one that can not only really help our kids and keep them safer but maybe also inspires them.

References:

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WRITTEN COMMENTS

Inclusion / Equity

- **Haneen Ismaili**, prohaneen@gmail.com

Hi my name is Haneen and I'm a senior at Eastlake Highschool,

My experience at Eastlake Highschool has been full of disappointment. The blatant racism, discrimination and microaggression perpetuated by the students along with transparent ignorance of the staff and faculty, is bound to have impacted every single Person of Color attending EHS. The videos of all these racist LWSD students surfacing recently, isn't the first. These kids have always been racist only their racism has always been tolerated. I'm calling for LWSD to do better in expanding resources for all POC and LGBTQ+ students, along with making sure the history and material we are taught isn't based on the white-washed agenda we've been learning for years.

- **Abby Hu**, abbyhappyhu@gmail.com

My name is Abby Hu and I am a rising senior attending Eastlake High School.

From the July 13th board meeting until now, it does not seem that the LWSD board, and LWSD collectively, are putting forth a plan to push for equity throughout the entire district, at all levels.

School starts in about one week. How is LWSD planning to enter this school year amplifying, listening, respecting, and validating marginalized voices? Not only in a virtual environment, but sustaining that to when we go back to in-person learning.

I don't have much to say because, having been a student in LWSD for the past 12 years, I am continually let down by the performative allyship of those at the school and district level, collectively.

This is my senior year and I am and will work to amplify voices to make change in LWSD. I have held my experiences in for far too long, no one to tell, not even my parents because they tell me to "just take it. Don't talk back, this is how it is for us". I want to make sure there are safe spaces where BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ students can go to where they know their voices are heard and feel empowered.

To the all-white district board, get comfortable feeling uncomfortable.