



# Carlynton School District

School Police Officer Survey  
Parent and Student Summary

## OVERVIEW - PARENTS

As part of the ongoing discussion regarding the creation of a School Police Officer (SPO) position in the Carlynton School District, the district conducted a parent survey to gauge community perspectives. Parents were asked to respond to a variety of questions ranging from emotional reaction, perceived safety, and support for carrying a firearm, roles and responsibilities, and uniform with an opportunity to elaborate on concerns and benefits. Below is a summary of the findings and notable trends of the seventy-one parents who responded to the survey.

## EMOTIONAL REACTIONS - PARENTS

In regard to emotional reactions to a SPO, feedback was mixed but leaned more positive overall. At the younger grade-level, 1<sup>st</sup> grade, parents expressed the most favorable reactions (4.8), the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade level reported the least positive reactions (3.43) and reactions from high school parents were generally favorable ranging between 4.0 and 5.0. The overall response to the emotional reaction was 3.89, 80% scored 3 or above, 68% scored four and above suggesting an underlying belief in the potential value of the position.

## PERCEIVED SAFETY - PARENTS

In regard to perceived safety, 70 % of parents at the secondary level reported a score of 4 or higher and only one respondent reported a score of less than two in regard to perceived safety benefit. Parents of younger students in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade responded with 4.4 and 4.25 respectively, while 3<sup>rd</sup> grade was slightly lower at 3.57. The overall response to perceived safety was 4.04, 92% scored 3 or above. This perception aligns with a general desire to create a secure environment for students and staff.

## FIREARM - PARENTS

In regard to the SPO carrying a firearm, 77% of parents responded with a three or above and 63% responded with a four or above. The average score in this area was a 3.78. The results were very similar while comparing feedback from elementary parents and secondary parents. Parents of younger children showed moderate support, 1<sup>st</sup> grade: 3.6, 2<sup>nd</sup> grade: 3.63, while parents of 3<sup>rd</sup>-grade students were least supportive 2.71. These data reflect support for an

armed SPO, with some parents seeing firearms as a necessary safety measure but others expressing reservations.

## **OVERALL TAKEAWAYS - PARENTS**

Some respondents raised concerns about potential disproportionate impacts on vulnerable student groups, such as students with special needs or students of color. These comments were generally provided by those who listed their race/ethnicity as White/Caucasian and Hispanic/Latino. Responses were generally consistent across racial and ethnic groups, with a slightly higher perception of safety benefits among Black/African American parents and those who identified as Native Americans. These concerns, while not dominant, highlight the need for careful consideration of training and oversight. Parents who supported the role emphasized enhanced safety and a stronger deterrent against external threats; immediate response capability in emergencies; and positive relationship-building opportunities if the SPO engages proactively with students and staff.

Younger grade parents emphasized creating a safe and nurturing environment, while parents of older students were more focused on the role of the SPO in addressing external threats or emergencies. While some parents viewed an armed SPO as a deterrent and a critical safety measure, others expressed apprehension about firearm misuse, accidents, or psychological impacts on students. A recurring concern was the possibility of students accessing the firearm or it being used inappropriately.

The data suggests a cautious but generally supportive attitude toward implementing an SPO, particularly if concerns about equity, training, and firearm safety are addressed. It will be critical to continue clearly define the SPO's responsibilities, focusing on proactive engagement and relationship-building with, prioritize relationship-building with students. Furthermore, we will need to prioritize extensive training to address community concerns, particularly around equity and safety along with maintaining ongoing communication with stakeholders to ensure transparency and alignment with the district's safety goals. Finally, the district will need to ensure the officer is thoroughly trained to handle diverse school environments.

## **OVERVIEW - STUDENTS**

Students at the secondary level were asked to share their thoughts on various topics, including the officer's role, uniform, equipment, and perceived safety impacts. Thirty-two students participated in the electronic survey that was offered and the School Safety and Security Coordinator met with nearly one hundred students. The results listed below reflect feedback gleaned from the online survey.

## **SAFETY & PERCEPTIONS - STUDENTS**

Feedback about the introduction of an SPO generally leaned positive, with most students expressing feelings of safety and security. Emotional reaction scores averaged 4.2 out of 5, indicating that many students feel reassured by the presence of an SPO in their school. A majority of students believed that the SPO's presence would make the school more secure. The average score for perceived safety was 4.6 out of 5, with responses reflecting confidence in the SPO's ability to prevent threats and maintain order. Students highlighted potential benefits, such as reducing fights, preventing dangerous situations, and creating a safer school environment. While many students reported no concerns, a few expressed apprehensions about potential abuse of power, worrying that the SPO might misuse their authority. Some students also expressed concern that students might become distracted by the SPO's presence rather than focusing on their studies. These data aligned very closely with the in person conversations conducted the School Safety and Security Coordinator.

## **FIREARM & UNIFORM - STUDENTS**

Support for the SPO carrying a firearm was mixed but leaned positive. Students who supported this measure emphasized its necessity for extreme emergencies. Some students expressed a preference for the firearm to remain concealed to avoid causing alarm. Students were divided between preferring a traditional police uniform and a more discreet or approachable appearance. The uniform's importance averaged 3 out of 5, suggesting it is not a major factor for most students. Commonly suggested items included radios, handcuffs, pepper spray, and firearms (for emergencies). A majority of students supported the use of body cameras for accountability and transparency.

## **PRIOR INTERACTIONS - STUDENTS**

Most students reported positive or neutral past interactions with law enforcement, shaping their view of the SPO as a guardian or protector. A small number of students had no significant past interactions, leaving them uncertain about the role's impact. Furthermore, the majority of students believed the presence of an SPO would neither increase nor decrease their attendance, reflecting that their primary focus is on the SPO's role in ensuring safety rather than directly influencing their desire to attend school.

## **OVERALL TAKEAWAYS - STUDENTS**

The survey indicates that students generally view the introduction of an SPO as a positive step toward improving safety and security in the district. Their feedback highlights the importance of clearly defining the SPO's role to ensure proactive engagement and prevent potential misuse of authority. In addition, selecting an approachable and well-trained officer who can build trust with students was an important data point.