

center.link

RESEARCH BRIEF

Center For The Prevention Of School Violence

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS

With an eighty-five percent increase in the number of School Resource Officers (SROs) in North Carolina over the past two years, the effectiveness of the approach is of great interest. The Center for the Prevention of School Violence has been conducting research on SROs since 1994. All aspects of the SRO approach have been examined in the Center's effort to enhance understanding, knowledge, and "best practices" about the approach. Included in this research is an ongoing effort to determine the "effectiveness" of placing law enforcement officers in schools.

In order to judge this effectiveness, the Center has established a definition of "School Resource Officer" which is based in research and in consensus which exists within the law enforcement community. An "SRO" is a certified law enforcement officer who is permanently assigned to provide coverage to a school or a set of schools. The SRO is specifically trained to perform three roles: law enforcement officer; law-related counselor; and law-related education teacher. The SRO is a comprehensive resource for his/her school and is part of a programmatic approach to placing law enforcement officers in schools.

The SRO research undertaken by the Center is of both a qualitative and quantitative nature. The Center has conducted surveys of principals, teachers, and students who have experienced the SRO approach. It has also pursued pre-and post-tests which measure school climate impacts of SRO placement and has begun to examine the impact of SROs on reported incidents of crime and violence on school property.

Of particular note are the findings concerning SROs in the Center's 1997 survey of high school principals and assistant principals in North Carolina. With "one" representing a "most effective" rating concerning impact on school safety and security, SROs received a "one" as a modal (most often occurring) rating; sixty-two percent of the respondents rated SROs with a "one;" another twenty-six percent rated them with a "two," and the lowest rating received was a "five."

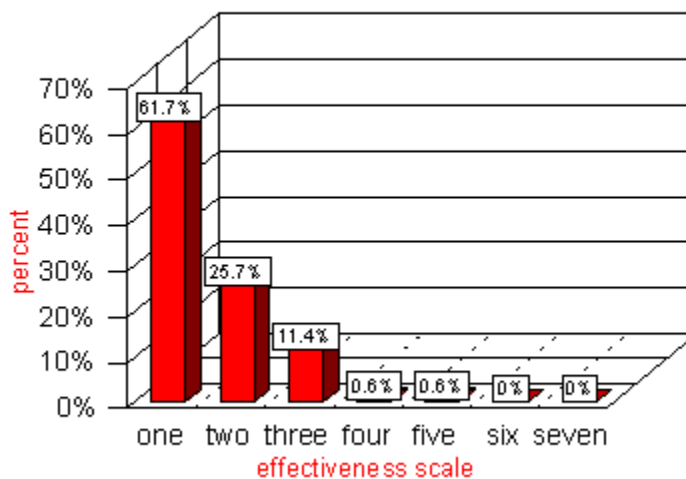
Center surveys of teachers and students concerning SRO impact on school climate have also yielded positive findings concerning SRO effectiveness. A preliminary post-test of teachers and students in Duplin County high schools after only three months of SRO placement, for example, revealed that both groups think positively about the SRO approach. Eighty-four percent of the teachers said "the SRO's presence contributes to deterring violence" with seventy-eight percent saying the SRO presence deters drug activity. Sixty-five percent said the SRO "has helped reduce the amount of violence" at the school, and seventy-one percent said they felt safer because of the SRO's presence. Seventy-percent said that the "SRO's presence contributes to a better learning environment."

With reference to impact, students were asked if "the SRO's presence contributes to deterring violence?" Fifty-three percent said "yes" to this question with forty-five percent saying that "the SRO's presence contributes to deterring drug activity." Forty-one percent said the SRO had "helped reduce the amount of violence since he had been at [the] school," and forty-seven percent said they felt safer because of the SRO's presence.

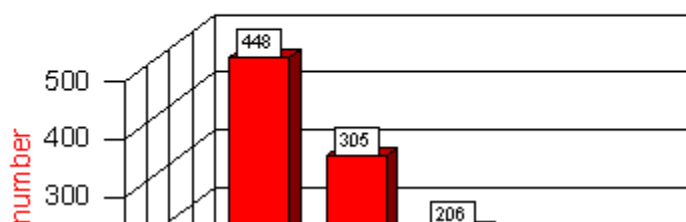
In terms of impact on reported incidents of crime and violence on school property, a correlation exists between the reduction in the number of firearms reported on school property and increasing numbers of SROs assigned to schools combined with zero tolerance approaches, tougher

EFFECTIVENESS OF SROs

CPSV HIGH SCHOOL STRATEGY SURVEY: 1997



REPORTED NUMBER OF FIREARMS POSSESSED ON SCHOOL PROPERTY (NCDPI)



laws, and the Center's statewide efforts. Further analysis of this correlation is being conducted to determine the extent to which SROs are contributing to this reduction.

The above findings are supplemented by anecdotal evidence gained over the Center's four years of research on SROs. When aggregated, all of the evidence suggests that the strategy of assigning SROs to schools is effective in enhancing the safety and security of these schools.

For more information about the Center, call:
Center for the Prevention of School Violence
toll free at 1-800-299-6054.

[Return to Home Page](#) | [School Violence](#) | [The Center](#) | [Safe Schools Pyramid](#) | [Public Awareness Campaign](#) | [Special Projects](#) | [Newsletters](#) |
[Research Bulletins](#) | [Special Feature Articles](#) | [Center's Staff](#)

