June 2, 2021

***The***

***Education***

***Coalition***

Working together to support and

improve California’s public schools

**Memorandum**

TO:CA State Policymakers

FM: The Education Coalition

**Association of California School Administrators (ACSA)** representing more than 17,000 school administrators

**California Association of School Business Officials (CASBO)** representing more than 23,000 school business officials

**California County Superintendents Educational Services Association (CCSESA)** representing all 58 county superintendents throughout California

**California Federation of Teachers (CFT-AFL-CIO)** representing nearly 120,000 education employees

**California School Boards Association (CSBA)**

representing nearly 1,000 K-12 school districts and county offices of education throughout California

**California School Employees Association (CSEA)**

representing more than 250,000 classified school employees

**California State PTA**

representing 700,000 parents, teachers, and students in California

**California Teachers Association (CTA)**

representing over 325,000 educators

**Service Employees International Union (SEIU)**

representing more than 50,000 school employees in California

**Legislative Consultant:**

**Dale Shimasaki** 916.441.3909

RE: Ad Hoc Committee on Racial Justice - Paper on School Policing

The Education Coalition is comprised of the nine statewide K-12 education associations to provide consensus positions protecting the integrity of Proposition 98 and funding in the budget for K-12 public education.

The nine statewide organizations include:

* Association of California School Administrators [ACSA]
* California Association of School Business Officials [CASBO]
* California County Superintendents Educational Services Association [CCSESA]
* California Federation of Teachers [CFT]
* California School Boards Association [CSBA]
* California School Employees Association [CSEA]
* California State Parent Teachers Association [PTA]
* California Teachers Association [CTA]
* Service Employees International Union [SEIU]

Each year, the Education Coalition issues budget position papers and meets with legislative members of the budget and policy committees to share our consensus position on the major budget proposals in education in the state budget.

For further information contact Dale Shimasaki, the Consultant to the Education Coalition at 916-441-3909.

**Education Coalition Ad Committee on Racial Justice**

**Paper on School Policing**

**Findings on School Policing**

The Ad Hoc Committee engaged many stakeholders on the topic of school policing, including West Ed., the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), the Black Organizing Project, the Advancement Project, the California Community College Chancellor’s Office, the California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) and various student organizations and local education agencies. After many months of robust dialogue and careful deliberation, it is clear that improvements to school police officer training, the role of school police, and data and transparency are needed to improve the safety and educational experience of all students, particularly those who are disproportionately targeted by over policing, including Black and Latinx students, and students with disabilities. These reforms will improve student outcomes by boosting attendance, facilitating positive school culture, and increasing engagement, all of which will also contribute to improved academic performance.

**Robust Training that is Relevant to K-12 Settings**

Establish Minimum Education and Training Requirements

There is often a significant disparity in the number of hours police officers receive in training specific to working in K-12 school settings. For example, municipality police officers with school assignments can work at a school site with no training specific to working with students in a K-12 setting. Conversely, there is a requirement that police officers hired directly by LEAs receive forty [40] hours of training specific to school settings prior to working on a school campus.

***Recommendation:*** A minimum number of hours of K-12 specific training should be required of all police officers working in school settings, regardless of the hiring agency. Further, K-12 specific training should not only be required prior to assignment but there should be ongoing professional development to ensure police officers are aware of up-to-date practices, are current on laws, and new skills, especially as they relate to the school environment.

Improve Training Curriculum

Police officers working in K-12 school settings should receive training that is applicable to working with youth and equips officers with increased knowledge related to childhood development, mental health, de-escalation techniques, the history of school policing, restorative justice, and the unique lived experiences of the diverse populations within the school community. The Ad Hoc Committee learned that training provided to school-based officers combine curriculum that is applicable to both community college and K-12 settings. Working with students in K-12 settings is very different than working on a community college campus.

***Recommendation:*** The POST approved training for school-based police officers should be bifurcated so K-12 school-based officers receive training that is fully applicable to the work they will be performing. Furthermore, the minimum standards for the course trainers should include competencies in diverse cultures, structural and systemic racism, race relations, mental health issues, youth development, implicit bias, etc. To further ensure that training for school policing is effective and a reflection of school needs, a task force of K-12 educators (school board members, administrators, teachers, classified staff, students, parents and community groups) should be established to make recommendations to and advise POST on the topics that should be included in K-12 school police officer training curriculum and ongoing professional development courses.

**Need for Comprehensive Data and Transparency**

Collect and Make Available Statewide Data

There is a lack of data on school policing. Specifically, there is no data available on the number of school resource officers or numbers of contract police staff who are hired by school districts. Neither is there comprehensive reporting on the number of arrests, referrals to law enforcement, and related information that would help in understanding how to improve safety practices. This lack of information makes it difficult to determine appropriate policy changes to improve school safety at local districts and schools. The use of the words “school resource officer” are often used interchangeably to refer to both school district police and outside agency officers, creating confusion. Clarity on the definition would make collected data more valuable for analysis.

***Recommendation****:* The Department of Education needs to collect and make available comprehensive data related to school police hiring and interactions between students and police. This data must be disaggregated by student demographics such as race, ethnicity, gender, income, and other factors.

Improve Access to Police Officer Personnel Files

In most cases, LEAs aren’t able to access a police officer’s personnel files before hiring, a major shortcoming as districts try to identify suitable candidates for this unique line of work where children’s lives are at stake.

***Recommendation:*** It should be required that all civilian complaints and personnel disciplinary actions be made available to the district before hiring to prevent a district from unknowingly hiring an officer with a history of excessive force or other incidents that suggest a potential threat to student well-being.

Improve Transparency at the Local Level

Clear and consistent communication among the school board, administrators, teachers, police, school-site staff, students, parents, and community members contribute to the success of school safety programs. Increased transparency on these matters will improve school safety and trust and confidence in the police amongst students, parents, and other community members.

***Recommendation:*** School boards should regularly include in their meeting agendas updates on school policing, which should include disaggregated data on student interactions with police.

Implement Support and Accountability Measures

Local education agencies often require a degree of support to implement best practices and should be evaluated to ensure basic accountability with the goal of continuous improvement.

***Recommendation:*** In order to ensure that LEAs are implementing school policing practices related to hiring, training, and data reporting as prescribed, a biennial audit of California LEAs by a third party should be required with implementation assistance available for districts that demonstrate need.

**Clear Role of School Police and Administrators**

Clarify Roles and Ensure Local Adherence

Districts need to clarify and enforce the appropriate role of school safety officers. Too often, educators call upon law enforcement and school police respond to matters that fall outside the scope of police responsibility. School police should be responsible for enforcing penal code and not for enforcing student disciplinary matters, which are the responsibility of school administrators.

Clarify Role of Site Administrators

Districts can unnecessarily involve police officers and security personnel in conduct that is either mental health related and should be referred to mental health professionals or discipline related and should be handled by site administrators.

***Recommendation:*** School district and police contract language should explicitly outline the role of the school police, including specifying limits and matters that are to be handled by school administration. Furthermore, training and materials should be provided to school police officers, school administrators, and staff to ensure all stakeholders are clear on the defined roles and responsibilities of school police.

**Importance of Local Investments in Best Practices**

Restorative Justice and Other Proven Alternative Strategies

The ad hoc committee heard from students negatively impacted by the presence of police officers on campus and about the harsh and disparate punishments given to African American students for things as simple as talking back to a teacher or bringing a cup of Starbucks coffee onto campus. Zero tolerance policies with harsh punishments increase the chances of students dropping out of school and feed the school to prison pipeline for so many of our children of color. We had an inspiring presentation by the administration, school board, school staff, student body and community of San Bernardino Unified School District, which highlighted the success that came from utilizing a community schools model and a district-wide restorative justice program to deal with student behavioral issues. Restorative justice resolves disciplinary problems in a cooperative and constructive way with a focus on mediation and agreement rather than punishment.

***Recommendation:*** Schools need to invest more resources into programs that support student development and learning such as mental health supports, social emotional learning, restorative justice, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS), and needed health and social services.

**Conclusion**

The role of police officers on K-12 school campuses needs to be refined and clarified. School police officers must receive ongoing training specific to the K-12 setting from professionals with the right competencies. There also needs to be a collection of data regarding school policing and full transparency of that data at all levels. Schools need to invest in restorative justice practices and other alternative to discipline strategies. With regard to school policing, we are confident that our recommendations, as a collective, will improve school climate and safety on school campuses for students of color, which will ultimately result in improved academic performance and success. In subsequent papers, we will identify other issue areas that are part of the systemic racism that permeates our schools and provide recommendations in those areas.