



Framingham Public Schools
Robert A. Tremblay, Ed. D., Superintendent of Schools

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MEMORANDUM

DATE: July 10, 2020
TO: Framingham School Committee
FROM: Robert A. Tremblay, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools
RE: School Resource Officers (SROs) in the Framingham Public Schools

Introduction

This memo provides recently requested information on the mission, goals and objectives of the School Resource Officer (SRO) Program; summarizes the SRO selection and training processes; reviews a recent chronology of activities between the Mayor, Framingham Public Schools (FPS) and the Framingham Police Department (FPD) and community members; and closes with a list of proposed action steps.

Mission, Goals and Objectives of the School Resource Officer (SRO) Program

As provided in the [Memorandum of Understanding \(MOU\) between the Framingham Public Schools and the Framingham Police Department](#), “the School Resource Officer (SRO) Program is based upon the fundamental premise that when schools, police, prosecutors, and other service agencies work collaboratively and proactively, the safety, mental health, and well-being of children and youth are best served. By working together to educate the school community, coordinate efforts, and share information, the Framingham Public Schools and the Framingham Police Department through the SRO Program strive to: (1) prevent violence involving the students of the Framingham Public Schools; (2) prevent the use, abuse, and distribution of alcohol and other controlled substances involving students of the Framingham Public Schools; and (3) provide a safe, secure, violence-free, and nurturing school environment.”

The SRO Program is designed to provide a safe, secure, violence-free, and nurturing school environment while creating strong relationships between the Framingham Public Schools, Framingham Police Department, and the community. The goals and objectives for the SRO Program, as stated in the MOU, include:

- Developing positive relationships with students, faculty, staff, and parents, thereby enhancing the relationship of law enforcement with youth and the community and improving the educational climate;
- Providing a positive role model for students to instill in them good moral standards, judgment and discretion, respect for other students, and a sincere concern for their community;
- Providing a cooperative effort by being accessible and responsive to the needs of the students, faculty, staff, parents, and community;
- Providing enhanced security and law enforcement service, thereby maintaining a safe, secure, and violence-free school environment that allows all students to learn and flourish;
- Creating a strong partnership between school and police personnel with a clear understanding, appreciation, and delineation of the roles and responsibilities of each;
- Ensuring that non-violent infractions of school rules and policies not amounting to criminal or delinquent conduct such as tardiness, use of profanity, and disruptive or disrespectful behavior remain the sole responsibility of school administrators;
- Ensuring that SROs are timely notified of Mandatory Reportable incidents, as described in this agreement;
- Minimizing the number of students that are unnecessarily out of the classroom, arrested at school, or court involved;
- Identifying and providing preventive help and services to at-risk students and families;
- Providing requirements and guidance for training of the SRO and school personnel regarding SRO-related topics;
- Assisting school personnel in the development of school emergency crisis policies and guidelines (to include Threat Assessment) and assisting with the facilitation of disaster-based drills while updating and augmenting said policies and guidelines as needed; and
- Offering additional educational resources to the students, faculty, staff, parents, and community through presentations and programming by the SRO that focus on law enforcement, prevention, health, and safety topics.

SRO Selection Process

The City of Framingham currently has two (2) officers (SROs) dedicated to the Framingham school district and one (1) dedicated to Joseph P. Keefe Technical High School. These positions are funded in the City's FPD budget, not in the FPS operating budget.

In accordance with [Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 71, Section 37P](#) and as provided in the MOU (2018), the Framingham Police Department (FPD) is committed to selecting SROs who will foster an optimal learning environment and educational community. While the selection of each SRO technically remains within the discretion of the Chief of Police, the current practice is that FPD works together with FPS school administrators to interview and select SROs. As provided in the MOU, "the appointment(s) shall not be based solely on seniority; rather, preference will be given to officers who demonstrate the requisite personality, character, skills, and interest to work in a school environment with children and educators and who have received

specialized training related to working with children and adolescents, including cognitive development, de-escalation techniques, and alternatives to arrest and diversion strategies.”

Other factors for consideration in selecting an SRO, as provided in the MOU, include:

1. An ability to work effectively with students within the age range at the assigned school(s);
2. An awareness of and education about the cultural descriptors that make up the community's world views, including race, age, gender, gender identity, ethnicity, religion, culture, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, immigration status, primary language and English proficiency, socioeconomic status, educational level, and occupation;
3. A commitment to making all students and the school community feel welcomed, valued, respected, and acknowledged regardless of cultural descriptors;
4. Knowledge of school-based legal issues;
5. A commitment to protecting students' legal and civil rights;
6. Knowledge of school and community resources;
7. An understanding of crime prevention problem-solving and community policing in a school setting;
8. Public speaking and teaching skills; and
9. Knowledge of school safety planning and technology.

SRO Training

As provided in the MOU, in addition to any basic and annual in-service training required of their officers by the Framingham Police Department, SROs shall receive specialized training to promote their effectiveness working with children and youth in a school setting.

Framingham SROs receive training in the following areas:

- SRO Course (National Association of School Resource Officers);
- Child and Adolescent Development (including the impact of abuse, exploitation, violence, trauma, disability, poverty, and immigration status);
- Missing and Exploited Children (National Center for Missing Children) Seminar;
- Child Abuse Unit Police Training on Physical Abuse;
- Conflict Resolution;
- Gay and Lesbian Youth Support Foundation Training;
- Strategies for Youth: Policing the Teen Brain;
- Diversion strategies and practices;
- Multi Hazard School Program (school crisis planning, threat assessment, and emergency response);
- Adult Mental Health First Aid;
- Cyber safety;
- Juvenile Law and Procedure (including student rights and privacy);
- Trauma-Informed Care;

- De-escalation Skills;
- Drug Prevention Programs;
- Physiology of Addiction;
- Teen Dating Violence and Healthy Teen Relationships; and
- Bullying Prevention and Management and Law Enforcement.

SROs in the Framingham Public Schools: Status Review Chronology

June 17, 2020

The Equity, Inclusion and Diversity Subcommittee of the Framingham School Committee met and discussed the expressed concerns about School Resource Officers in the Framingham Public Schools. Action items were developed and scheduled to be presented to the full School Committee at their next scheduled Open Session meeting on July 1, 2020.

June 22, 2020

Dr. Robert A. Tremblay, Superintendent of the Framingham Public Schools (Superintendent), scheduled a Zoom meeting to discuss the concerns that emerged around police presence (SROs) in the Framingham Public Schools (FPS) as presented in a “Divest from Police in our Schools” [petition](#) organized by Framingham Families for Racial Equity in Education (FFREE). The meeting served as an opportunity for secondary school leaders, district-level leaders, and city officials to listen to the issues presented and to consider next steps to be taken to address the concerns that were raised. Participants included representative students (among them Black Student Union [BSU] leadership and English Learners), FFREE members (parents), FHS Administrators, Middle School Principals, Mayor Spicer, Police Chief Trask, Deputy Police Chief Brandolini, Keefe Superintendent of Schools Jon Evans, and several Central Office administrators.

June 24, 2020

The Superintendent sent an email update to the Framingham School Committee with a link to the Zoom meeting that was co-hosted by the Superintendent and Meenakshi Verma Agrawal from FFREE on June 22, 2020.

June 25, 2020

The Superintendent met with all FPS secondary school administrators to discuss/debrief the concerns that were raised during the June 22, 2020 meeting. The Superintendent advised the team that he would be meeting with Mayor Spicer and Chief Brandolini to discuss next steps with respect to the SRO Program.

July 1, 2020

The Equity, Inclusion and Diversity Subcommittee of the Framingham School Committee reported out the following proposed actions in response to the concerns raised about the presence and funding of police officers (SROs) in the Framingham Public Schools; the School Committee voted to accept all seven recommendations:

1. Revise the current MOU and specify processes;
2. Report(s) to Dr. Tremblay, Mr. Corazzini and Mr. Penrod whenever there is an SRO “hands-on” incident;
3. "Know Your Rights" training for students;
4. Quarterly meetings between SROs and student representatives from middle schools and high school;
5. De-escalation Training;
6. Discuss the role of SROs and what they do; and
7. Get as much data as currently exists regarding SROs’ interactions with students.

July 6, 2020

The Superintendent met with Mayor Spicer (Mayor) and Acting Chief Brandolini (Chief) to discuss next steps with regard to the SRO Program in the Framingham Public Schools. The Superintendent suggested that he and the Chief review the existing SRO job description and current MOU with Lt. Tersoni, who oversees the SROs, and the FPS district and school administration to ensure that the day-to-day functions of the SROs reflect the job description and to amend as appropriate. A similar effort was undertaken with the FPS Director of Safety & Security position to ensure that current practice and job responsibilities were aligned with the written job description.

July 7, 2020

Acting Chief Brandolini provided a copy of the current SRO job description, which will be reviewed and amended (as detailed above). Moving forward, there will be an ongoing, annual review of both the SRO job description and the MOU, both of which are overdue for review.

July 9, 2020

Superintendent met with SROs (Officers McGrath and Ball), Lt. Tersoni, and Joseph Corazzini, Assistant Superintendent for Equity, Diversity, and Community Development, to discuss the history of the long-standing SRO Program, address concerns that were raised in the FFREE petition and verbalized during the Zoom meeting, and review the recommendations as presented by the Equity, Inclusion and Diversity Subcommittee to the Framingham School Committee.

July 9, 2020

The Superintendent sent an email message to Meenakshi Verma Agrawal (FFREE) requesting a follow-up meeting to discuss all that has transpired in recent weeks regarding SROs in the

Framingham Public Schools and action steps planned by the Framingham Police Department and FPS to address the concerns that have been raised (see Action Steps below).

July 15, 2020

Discussion about SROs in the Framingham Public Schools with the Framingham School Committee is scheduled in Open Session to review the following proposed Action Steps.

Action Steps

1. Consistent with Section IV, Part D of the MOU, the SRO Program will be reviewed annually to evaluate its success and effectiveness in meeting its stated goals and objectives. The review will be conducted jointly by the Chief of Police and Superintendent of the Framingham Public Schools at the end of each school year.
2. The district will establish a working committee made up of students, staff and parents to review the model annually. The MOU, including the SRO Goals and Objectives and SRO job description, should be amended as required as a result of said review. As part of the annual review, the performance and effectiveness of each SRO shall be evaluated. The annual review of the 2019-2020 school year is underway and will be completed and reported out by this fall;
3. Consistent with Section IV, Part D of the MOU, the Superintendent, in consultation with the Principal(s) of the assigned school(s), will provide input regarding the evaluation of the SRO Program. This input (e.g., regarding police officer dress, presence of police vehicles on school property, etc.) should take into consideration and include feedback from teachers, students, and the school community. This evaluation is underway and will be completed and reported out by this fall;
4. Consistent with Section VI, Part E of the MOU, SROs shall not serve as school disciplinarians, as enforcers of school regulations, or in place of licensed school mental health professionals, and SROs shall not use police powers to address traditional school discipline issues, including non-violent disruptive behavior; The district, in partnership with FPD, will develop a tool to track school SRO requests and SRO interventions. This tool will serve as a data tracking system to assist in the evaluation of the program. Principals, Vice Principals and Deans of Students will document SRO interventions and interactions with individual students in Aspen X2, the district data warehouse.
5. Daily collection and quarterly reporting of both the quantitative and qualitative data detailing the interventions that occur between SROs and students (arrests and mitigation efforts) and using these data points to engage conversations with students, staff, and administrators;
6. Quarterly meetings with students and staff, facilitated by the Assistant Superintendent of Equity, Diversity, and Community Development, will be scheduled to ensure that student

and staff voices are heard, that student rights are clearly understood, and that feelings and emotions are shared and concerns are addressed in a timely manner in an effort to develop and nurture relationships between our students, staff, administrators, and SROs;

7. SROs and school leaders participate together in advanced de-escalation training and training on traditional school discipline vs SRO intervention.
8. FPS administrators and School Committee continue to prioritize the funding of licensed social workers in the annual school department budget demonstrating a commitment to meeting the holistic needs of all children in the district. FPS will establish a committee with staff and family to identify and prioritize the holistic needs of students that are currently not being met.
9. Continued development of the Framingham Public Schools Code of Character, Conduct, and Support to ensure a restorative model of disciplinary intervention that is consistent across the district and engages the voices of staff, parents, and administrators as a school community.
10. The Department of Health and Wellness in partnership with the Social Emotional Mental Health (SEMH) Team will be tasked with developing a rapid response protocol for schools that provides immediate support and assistance with students experiencing emotional distress.

Conclusion

In my experience, School Resource Officers are particularly effective when they can establish positive relationships with students and families. However, must be mindful that the presence of a police officer in schools may evoke emotions bred of personal circumstances that cannot be minimized. If these relationships are not positive, then we must correct our course, and we, as a community, are committed to that reflective and corrective effort. I recall that in the wake of past school shootings, for example, many communities were insistent upon increased police and security presence in schools. As a school and district leader for more than two decades, I have experienced the range of emotions that accompanied such efforts; yet ensuring the safety of students was then - and continues now to be - paramount.

The Framingham Public Schools have partnered with the Framingham Police Department, and we are grateful for two dedicated officers to support our students and families. The current SROs have forged relationships with our students, staff, administrators, and families, and are an important part of the fabric of our school community. We must, however, commit to actions that ensure that our students feel safer - not more fearful - with the resources that are provided to us.

To that end, I am grateful for the time spent to date by our school and district administrators, representative student voices from the middle and high school, our Mayor, the Police Chief and Deputy Chief, Superintendent of Keefe Technical High School, BSU, FFREE, and others to uncover the challenges that may exist and, consequently, to develop a plan on how to move

forward guided by facts, personal experiences, and best practices. While I cannot speak for every community, I can assure the Framingham community that we are committed to strengthening relationships with all of our community first responders and forging healthy relationships with students and families.

I hope this memo provides you with background and details on the activities in the last month, and I look forward to receiving the School Committee's feedback on July 15th.