



Greater Victoria Teachers' Association

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Via email

March 3, 2023

Board of Education
School District No. 61 (Greater Victoria)
556 Boleskine Road
Victoria BC V8Z 1E8

Dear Trustees,

Re: School Police Liaison Officers

The Greater Victoria Teachers' Association strongly recommends that:

The SD#61 Board of Education end the School Police Liaison Officer Programs (SPLO) and establish a committee to establish an action plan on how to implement the recommendations put forward by the School Police Liaison Officer (SPLO) review committee [*on ending the program, see below for clarity*], enhance mental health services in schools, address violence in the workplace, and provide evidence-based, harm-reduction and trauma-informed programming on drug use, consent/sexual violence and all other programs currently delivered by SPLO's."

This decision is based on research conducted by the BCTF on the effect of SLO (School Liaison Officers) on teachers from marginalized groups, numerous reports from organizations and civilian review committees across Canada on the effects of policing on marginalized populations, and the recommendation from the BC Human Rights Commissioner to end SLO programs. This research makes it evident that SLO programs cause harm that negatively affects the safety, rights, and sense of belonging that many marginalized people (including Indigenous, Black, People of Colour, 2SLGBTQIA+, and people with disabilities) experience in school.

Public conversations over the last several years have highlighted that Canada's policing and criminal justice systems have been founded on and continue to perpetuate systemic racism. For our schools to take meaningful anti-racist action, we must not ignore this legacy, or the ongoing harm caused by police.

While school budgets have been drastically reduced over the last 20 years, police budgets in British Columbia have increased beyond the rate of inflation. Victoria Teachers and school counsellors are working in a chronically underfunded system

marked by insufficient staffing, inadequate resources, and an expectation to do more with less. In this underfunded system, police have, at times, been used to fill gaps in school supports, by taking on a variety of roles, including supporting the work of school counsellors. The presence of SPLO's not only harms many marginalized students, but also does nothing to solve the broader systemic issues caused by underfunding and austerity. For this reason, in addition to ending the SPLO program, our district needs to provide fully funded academic, social, health, and emotional support services in schools, enhance the rights of students and have clear and significant policy to govern any interaction schools may have with police.

It is important that as a district that supports the rights of all learners and seeks to advance equity, diversity, and inclusion, that we embrace policy that supports the marginalized members of our community by ending all SPLO programs, and creating the supports necessary to support all learners.

Specific Recommendations from GVTA For the SPLO Review Committee:

That the board end the SPLO programs due to current trauma-informed research on impacts of policing on Black, Indigenous, People of Colour (BIPOC), 2SLGBTQIA+, and people with disabilities, AND;

- 1) Focus on preventative measures for intensive behaviour such as early intervention by:
 - a. Hiring appropriate professionals such counsellors, social workers, nurses, and behavioural support teachers to support complex needs of students.
 - b. Properly fund EA's to keep retention rate of EA's to support at ground level.
- 2) Delivery of curriculum programs be administered by appropriate groups/organizations that present information based on research, from a trauma-informed, compassionate perspective that addresses structural inequities and power dynamics.
- 3) That administrators be directed to track the frequency, purpose, and intensity of all uses of police in schools and report directly to the superintendent and school trustees.
- 4) Establish thorough and sufficient policy to govern actions of all interactions with police in schools which includes:
 - a. Complaints Process:
 - i. A substantial and impartial complaints process specifically referring to police be established along with a dedicated ombudsperson at each school who will assist students and families with the process.

- ii. That the complaints process be made clear to families in three situations during the school year (i.e., principal letter, school assembly, PAC meetings etc.) and to students in their classroom (by teacher).
- b. That all schools develop discipline and behaviour management procedures that are based in trauma-informed research on impacts of BIPOC, 2SLGBTQIA+ students, and students with disabilities.
 - i. That the district adopt an official policy that police not be used in instances of student behaviour management and that the district invest appropriately in school and mental health supports for situations that require intensive intervention.
 - ii. Investing in creating safer schools without police by utilizing models of transformative and/or restorative justice and utilizing approaches outlined in alternative approaches to discipline overview
<https://mje.mcgill.ca/article/view/9547/7381>.
 - iii. That data be collected on race, ethnicity, ability, gender expression of students disciplined, and that if police are involved in any services provided to these students, that families are contacted within a month of receiving services to provide anonymous feedback on the experience of the process.
- c. Student Rights:
 - i. That the district take an active stance against criminalization of youth specifically with respect to the Youth Criminal Justice Act.
 - ii. That the district adopt a restorative or transformational justice model for dealing with school related offences.
 - iii. That police may not be used in the surveillance of students, nor have the power to arrest, detain, interrogate, question, fine or ticket students on municipal code, juvenile, criminal or immigration-related matters on school grounds.
 - iv. On those rare occasions when it is appropriate for law enforcement to enter a school building, there should be agreements with police departments that limit the cases when law enforcement can be called into a school, with particular safeguards in place to ensure students' rights to education and dignity are protected, in addition to their constitutional rights to counsel and due process.
 - v. That police not be used to perform well-being checks on students attending or not attending school.
 - vi. That a lawyer or independent ombudsperson be appointed at each school for assisting students with navigating the criminal justice system and multi-jurisdictional sections if those services are required.

- vii. That Regulation 5145 be removed and that administrators not be able to substitute as legal guardians in the matter of the questioning of students. Students interacting with the criminal justice system be provided a lawyer for the purposes of legal counsel and ensuring their rights are upheld.
- d. Staff Training:
 - i. That all school staff are provided with current, research-based information on the impacts of policing on BIPOC, 2SLGBTQIA+ students, and students with disabilities
 - ii. That all district staff are provided in-service training on identifying personal implicit bias, as well as anti-racist and anti-oppressive training.
 - iii. That all school staff receive in-service training in trauma-informed/antiracist approaches to behaviour management.
- e. Police and School Community:
 - i. That police not attend school functions particularly for events where their presence may be triggering for BIPOC folks such as Orange Shirt Day, Rainbow Day, and Pink Shirt Day.
 - ii. That if police are brought in for the purposes of a class, all legal guardians of students must be notified 2 weeks in advance in writing and both legal guardians and students have the right to not attend these sessions without academic penalty.
 - iii. Police may not wear their street uniform or carry guns on school grounds. Police must be thoroughly identified, as students and staff have a right to know when they are speaking with an officer.
 - iv. That Regulation 5134.1 be removed and police not mentor individual or groups of students.
- f. School Programing:
 - i. That the District acknowledge the need for a diversity of people and perspectives to be brought into the classroom; the district should ensure there is funding and availability for members from community groups and organizations to present programming, with a special attention to BIPOC groups.
- h. Future Review Processes:
 - i. That the district take seriously the democratic concerns of having independent reviews of policing;
 - ii. That police officers may not sit on any review committee reviewing any function of policing within schools.
 - iii. Establish an impartial process for collecting data from the community that is trauma-informed, and is inclusive for all members of the community, particularly marginalized people, free

of barriers and safe to participate in for all consultative processes
policing related or otherwise.

5) Mental Health and Social Supports in Schools:

- a. That the District staffing formula include a base-level of counselling, behaviour support, psychologist, inclusive learning support, and other forms of inclusive mental health and social supports necessary to utilize a proactive model of safe schools and behaviour management.

6) Anti-racism/Anti-Oppression:

- a. The District establish an official definition of racism connected to democratic and systemic racism.
- b. Adopt an official policy with budget line items for anti-oppression work.
- c. Acknowledge and validate the historical and ongoing violence perpetuated against BIPOC folks by police through a public statement.
- d. That this process be steered by BIPOC folks from staff, students, and community.

Sincerely,



Ilda Turcotte
President, Greater Victoria Teachers' Association
cc GVTA Executive Committee