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School Resource Officer Program

2008/2009 Evaluation

October 2009

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Executive Summary

In early 2008, Chief William Blair approached the Toronto District School Board and the Toronto Catholic District School Board about implementing a School Resource Officer program in Toronto schools. The School Boards agreed to participate in the program and provincial funding allowed the placement of up to 30 School Resource Officers (SROs) in Toronto schools. The SRO mandate was to work in partnership with students, teachers, school administrators, School Board officials, parents, other police officers, and the community to establish and maintain a healthy and safe school community.

The evaluation of the School Resource Officer Program focussed on measuring related perceptions of students, teachers/administrators, parents and SROs in those schools where a School Resource Officer was assigned. Over 11,500 surveys were distributed in October 2008 and again in May 2009. The surveys were designed to benchmark and measure changes in perception of safety in and around the schools, relations with police, student comfort with and willingness to report crime and victimization to the police, and overall value of the program. The evaluation also included an analysis of crimes and victimization in and around the schools, and a review of the activities of the School Resource Officers.

The evaluation found that most students felt safe at school and in the neighbourhood around the school before (October 2008) and after (May 2009) the SRO program. Students who spoke informally to their SRO officer during the school year, and those who thought an SRO was a good idea were more likely to say they felt safe in school, while students who thought the program was a bad idea were more likely to say they did not feel safe. Student opinion of the SRO program did not have a significant effect on their perception of safety in the neighbourhood around the school.

With regard to student comfort with the police, there was an increase in reporting by students who had been a victim of crime, but no similar increase in reporting to police when students had witnessed a crime. Students who informally talked to the SRO and students who approached the SRO to talk about a problem were more likely to report being the victim of a crime or having witnessed a crime. The frequency with which students approached the SRO to talk about a problem did not affect their willingness to report. Students who thought the SRO was a good idea were more likely to report victimization, while those students who thought the SRO was a bad idea were more likely to report a crime they had witnessed.

The perceived relationships between students and police improved during the school year. The proportion of students who felt the relationship between police and students was good or excellent, increased from 56% to 67%; those who thought the relationship was excellent almost doubled over the school year. Almost half of the students at the beginning of the year said they wanted the SRO to make presentations at the school, and when an SRO coached a sports team or headed-up an extra curricular activity, most students believed that it was a very good/okay idea.

Most administrators and teachers felt safe at school and in the neighbourhood around the school both before and after the SRO program. Similar to the students, the proportion of administrators/teachers who believed that the relationship between police and students in their school was good or excellent increased during the school year; those who believed the relationship between police and students was excellent almost doubled.

Although most parents, in both October and May, were more likely to feel their child was 'reasonably' rather than 'very' safe, their perception of their child's safety at school improved over the year. Parents at the beginning and end of the school year felt positively about having an SRO assigned to their child's school; over 90% in October 2008 and May 2009 said it was a very good or okay idea, while only 2% said it was a bad idea.

School Resource Officers felt more a part of the school management team at the end of the school year than at the start; they also felt that conditions involving supportive/positive relationships with the school administration and/or teachers were important for performing their SRO duties. The SROs identified a number of challenges to performing their duties (e.g. unwelcoming or isolated office space, lack of information, and issues related to transportation). By the end of the school year, most SROs felt that students were comfortable with them.

In 2008/09 there were decreases in reported offences both on school grounds and within 200 metres of the school, over all the times that were examined.

Overall, the evaluation finds that the School Resource Officer program demonstrated a number of positive effects on schools and students, particularly those students who had interacted with the SROs. The SRO program has the potential to be increasingly beneficial to crime prevention, crime reporting and relationship building, in the schools and in surrounding neighbourhoods.

Background

The School Resource Officer (SRO) program is a partnership between the Toronto District and Toronto Catholic District School Boards and the Toronto Police Service.

The school environment provides an excellent opportunity for positive interaction with young people outside of traditional enforcement activities. This interaction can build relationships and trust, have valuable preventative effects, and positively affect youth safety. Students become accustomed to the presence of an officer who is not carrying out investigations or dealing with a crisis, and they may feel more comfortable approaching that officer about a problem or with information about a crime.

An officer in a school can also model problem-solving rather than impulsive reaction as a way of dealing with issues when they arise, and can be a valuable resource and source of information for students, teachers, school administrators, other staff, and parents. The SRO program should result in a partnership between the officer, students, and school staff that involves ongoing contact, communication, trust, and exchange of information.

School Resource Officer program history is often traced to the 1950s in Flint, Michigan, and many SRO programs were established throughout the United States in the 1970's.¹ Long running SRO programs also exist in Canada. For example, in 1979, the Edmonton Police Service partnered with Edmonton Public and Catholic schools to have officers in 4 of their schools; the program has since grown to 19 officers in 21 Edmonton high schools.² There are also SRO programs in Vancouver, Calgary, Ottawa, Winnipeg, and other cities throughout Canada.

Evaluations of SRO programs have been conducted in both the US and Canada. In the US, through a co-operative agreement with the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) and supported by the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office), a national assessment of School Resource Officer programs was completed in 2005. In addition to providing information to support program improvement, the findings contributed to a US Department of Justice guide to assist in the development, maintenance, and success of SRO programs.^{3,4} The US National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO) has conducted nation-wide evaluations of the SRO program in the United States for a number of years, and, in Canada, an in-depth evaluation of the Winnipeg Police Service SRO program was also completed in 2005.

The three-year evaluation of the North End School Resource Officer Partnership Initiative in Winnipeg found that key stakeholders believed that the SRO initiative builds credibility and trust of

¹ McDaniel, J. (2001). *School Resource Officers: What We Know, What We Think We Know, What We Need To Know*. Raleigh, North Carolina: Centre for the Prevention of School Violence, North Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. (Retrieved September 17, 2009, from http://www.ncdjjdp.org/cpsv/school_resource_officer.html)

² Edmonton Police Service (2009). *School Resource Officers*. (Retrieved September 14, 2009, from <http://www.edmontonpolice.ca/communitypolicing/familyprotection/schoolresourceofficers.aspx>)

³ Finn, P., Shively, M., McDevitt, J., Lassiter, W., & Rich, T. (2005). *Comparisons of Program Activities and Lessons Learned Among 19 School Resource Officer (SRO) Programs*. Washington, DC: Abt. Associates Incorporated. (Retrieved September 15, 2009, from http://www.ncdjjdp.org/cpsv/pdf_files/SRO_Natl_Survey.pdf)

⁴ Finn, P., Shively, M., Townsend, M., & Rich, T. (2005). *A Guide to Developing, Maintaining, and Succeeding With Your School Resource Officer Program*. Washington, DC: Abt. Associates Incorporated & US Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Service. (Retrieved September 15, 2009, from <http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/files/ric/Publications/sroguidelines.pdf>)

police among students, and that for many of the youth, their only experience with officers prior to the SRO program had been negative. In addition, SROs built relationships within the school and community by participating in school events, as well as extra curricular and other activities. It was found that SROs were becoming a vital resource for parents and school staff, who were increasingly seeking advice or help with problems. Business owners and managers in the area were also supportive of the program: 88% said the SRO program was beneficial.⁵

In early 2008, Chief William Blair approached the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) and the Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB) about implementing a School Resource Officer program in Toronto schools. Provincial funding permitted 30 officers to be assigned to 30 Toronto high schools: 22 TDSB school and 8 TCDSB schools. The schools were to be selected by the Boards and would only include schools willing to participate. The evaluation involved the collection of information from 29 of the initial 30 schools.⁶

The SROs were given a number of specific duties and responsibilities, including:

- be visible and active in the school community;
- facilitate communication and co-operation with school officials, other police officers, courts, and social service agencies;
- participate in crime prevention activities, including identification of school safety issues and the creation and implementation of programs and activities to address those issues;
- participate in activities intended to encourage and support a safe and engaged school community;
- liaise with school officials regarding emergency planning and site security;
- participate in risk assessment and threat assessment activities with school officials;
- provide information and education on the criminal justice system;
- facilitate communication among police, students, school staff, School Board representatives, and parents; and
- participate on the school council and other school and community associations.

The SROs were expected to establish positive relationships by being a visible uniform presence in and around the schools, co-ordinate school lectures and crime prevention, participate in the Empowered Student Partnerships program, facilitate and deliver educational programs, liaise with parent/teacher groups and the community, promote Crime Stoppers, provide support to officers conducting investigations relating to the school or students, and act as a resource to officers regarding the Police/School Protocol.

These duties and activities were intended to help the SROs fulfill their mandate of working in partnership with students, teachers, school administrators, School Board officials, parents, other police officers and the community to establish and maintain a healthy and safe school community.

The School Resource Officers were assigned to the Community Response unit within their Division. They worked a forty-hour week, Monday to Friday, although shifts could be changed to accommodate evening and weekend school events. The SRO was expected to perform their duties

⁵ PRA Incorporated (2005). *Evaluation of the North End School Resource Officer Partnership Initiative – Year Three Final Report*. Winnipeg, MB: Prepared for North End Community Renewal Corporation. (Retrieved September 14, 2009, from http://www.manitoba.ca/ia/programs/neighbourhoods/news/pdf/north_end_sro_evaluation.pdf)

⁶ The additional community consultation required for one school meant that the SRO was not assigned until after information collection for the evaluation had already begun.

in uniform. In addition to their assigned secondary school, where they were expected to spend the majority of their time, each SRO was also assigned to that school's identified feeder schools within their division. Throughout the school year, the SROs were required to attend orientation sessions related to their job function, and enhanced training on School Board policies, youth engagement, and program delivery.

Purpose/Research Questions

The evaluation of the School Resource Officer (SRO) program took place during the 2008/2009 school year, running from October 2008 to May 2009.

The overall goals of the School Resource Officer program were:

- Improve safety and perceptions of safety in and around schools.
- Improve perceptions of police.

Related to these program goals, the main questions for the evaluation were:

Did the School Resource Officer improve student perceptions of safety in their school and the surrounding community?

Was this affected by actual interaction or frequency of interaction with the SRO?

Was this affected by student opinion of the SRO?

Did the School Resource Officer improve student comfort with police and/ or willingness to report crimes to police?

Was this affected by actual interaction or frequency of interaction with the SRO?

Was this affected by student opinion of the SRO?

Did the School Resource Officer improve school administrator perceptions of safety in the school and the surrounding community?

Did the School Resource Officer improve parent perceptions of safety in the school and the surrounding community?

Did the School Resource Officer decrease crimes and victimization on school grounds?

To answer these questions, the evaluation measured the perceptions of safety in schools assigned a School Resource Officer and in the community surrounding the schools. It also measured perceptions of the police and the School Resource Officer program, and student comfort with, and willingness to report crime and victimization to, the police. The evaluation also examined crimes and victimization on school premises, and the activities and perceptions of the School Resource Officers.

Methodology

The main focus of the SRO evaluation was the assessment of outcomes – the immediate, short-term effects of the program (that is, what changes to behaviours/beliefs/attitudes occurred?). However, in order to assess whether the program was implemented as expected, the daily activities of the SROs were also examined. This, along with feedback from the SROs, also highlighted any obstacles or barriers that were encountered in carrying out program activities.

While it was initially hoped that data and information from the schools with SROs could be compared to that from schools without SROs as a control measure, this was not feasible for practical reasons. To respond to the desires of some schools that were not assigned an SRO, it was agreed that an SRO would “regularly” visit; for other schools, divisional Community Response officers were to visit. Given this ‘contamination’ of the potential control sample, it was decided that pre-post comparisons of the SRO schools only would be carried out.

Surveys

To assess perceptions of school safety, the safety of the surrounding community, the police, the SRO program, and, at year end, experiences with the SRO, four surveys were developed and administered: one for students, one for school administrators/teachers, one for parents, and one for the SRO officers. Completion of these surveys was voluntary.

Each of these groups, except the SROs, were surveyed twice – once in October 2008 and again in May 2009; survey distribution and return methodologies were the same at both times. The surveys in May 2009 included more questions addressing specific aspects of the SRO program and interaction with each school’s SRO.

At the end of the school year, in June 2009, a survey was distributed to the SROs to gather their thoughts and perceptions of the program, as well as recommendations for improvements.

Distribution to Students:

In each of the 29 schools participating in the SRO program, principals were asked to identify two Grade 9 classes, two Grade 10 classes, two Grade 11 classes, and two Grade 12 classes – eight classes (240 surveys) in total. Parental/Guardian consent forms for student participation were either mailed directly to parents/guardians with addresses (but not names) supplied by the schools or were delivered to the schools for them to mail out or provide to the selected students to take home.⁷

Toronto Police Service Auxiliary officers delivered 8 packages to each participating school in October 2008 and May 2009. Every package contained 30 student surveys, each with a return envelope. The principal was asked to have one package delivered to each identified class.

The class teacher distributed the surveys to the students and gave the students time to complete the survey if they wished. Once completed, the students were asked to seal their surveys in the envelopes provided and return the sealed envelopes to the teacher. The teacher placed all the

⁷ The School Boards decided whether the Police Service or their schools would distribute the consent forms .

sealed envelopes back into the package and returned the package to the principal. At a future agreed upon date, Auxiliary officers returned to the school to pick up the 8 packages with the completed surveys.

The students were not asked to identify themselves or the class.

A total of 6,960 surveys were delivered for distribution to students in October 2008 and again in May 2009.

Distribution to School Administrators and Teachers:

For the 29 schools participating in the SRO program, on the day that the student surveys were dropped off, the teacher in each of the 8 selected classes at each school, as outlined above, was also provided with a copy of the school administrator/teacher survey and a return envelope. Once completed, the sealed envelope with the teacher survey was included with the student surveys for that class and returned to the principal.

Copies of the school administrator/teacher survey were also left for the principal and for 2 vice-principals. Again, return envelopes were provided. Once completed, the sealed envelopes with the school administrator surveys were included with the student surveys for pick-up by a Service Auxiliary officer.

School Administrators and Teachers were not asked to identify themselves, and once again, completion of the survey was voluntary.

A total of 319 surveys were delivered for school administrators and teachers in October 2008 and again in May 2009.

Distribution to Parents:

Parent surveys were either mailed to parents/guardians by the Police Service or distributed by the schools. For these latter schools, the Auxiliary officer dropped off the parent surveys and return envelopes when delivering the student and administrator/teacher surveys.

As noted previously, consent forms were sent or delivered in October 2008 and May 2009 to parents/guardians of the 240 students who were selected to receive the student survey at those times in each of the 29 schools.

For those schools that provided addresses for the Police Service to mail the form, 150 addresses were selected at random from the 240 provided by each school. These 150 parents/guardians received a survey and postage-paid, addressed return envelope in addition to the consent form. Again, no parent/guardian names were identified.

For those schools that opted to have the consent forms delivered by students, 150 of the forms were accompanied by a survey for the parent/guardian and a postage-paid, addressed return envelope. Each principal was asked to randomly select which of the 240 parental/guardian consent forms would be accompanied by a survey.

And, for those schools that opted to mail out the consent forms themselves, they were asked to select, at random, 150 of the 240 students who were to receive the student survey and to mail the parent survey and postage-paid, addressed return envelope to those parents/guardians.

Parents were not asked to identify themselves or their child/children. The parent surveys were mailed directly back to the Toronto Police Service's Corporate Planning unit.

A total of 4,350 surveys were sent/provided for distribution to parents in October 2008 and again in May 2009.

Distribution to School Resource Officers (June 2009 only):

Each of the SROs received a survey distributed to them at a meeting of School Resource officers in June 2009. Once the survey was completed, it was returned to Corporate Planning through internal mail or via the Community Mobilization unit.

SRO Data Collection

In order to provide a profile of the how School Resource Officers spent their time, the activities they were involved in and how frequently, and the factors that affected their activities, each SRO was asked to complete a brief activity sheet at the end of each day that they were at their assigned school. The activity sheets were designed to be completed quickly, on-line, and e-mailed for entry into the analysis database.

Periodically, and as required, a list of officers who missed supplying an Activity Sheet was sent to the Co-ordinator of the School Resource Officer program in the Service's Community Mobilization unit for follow-up.

Crime and Victimization Data

For the 29 schools participating in the SRO program, the Service's Crime Information Analysis Unit provided the number of offences occurring both on school grounds and within 200 metres of the school. The total number of offences for all 29 schools during September 2007 – June 2008, inclusive, was compared with the total during September 2008 – June 2009, inclusive.

The Crime Information Analysis Unit provided data on victimization, again both on school grounds and within 200 metres of the school.⁸ And, the total number of victims from all 29 schools during September 2007 – June 2008, inclusive, was compared with the total in September 2008 – June 2009, inclusive.

Both number of offences and number of victims were examined over all hours, Monday to Sunday, during school hours (7 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday), and not during school hours (4 p.m. to 7 a.m. Monday through Friday).

⁸ Analysis of crime and victimization within a 200 meter radius was included in the evaluation to measure possible displacement or dispersion; 200-250 meters around a point is a standard distance for this type of analysis.

The following photo (Figure 1) illustrates the area that is generally covered within a 200 metre radius of a school.



Figure 1

Findings

Overview: Research Questions

As noted previously, there were particular questions that the evaluation was intended to address in the assessment of whether or not the program was achieving its goals. The evaluation findings specifically related to these questions are outlined here.

Did the School Resource Officer improve student perceptions of safety in their school and the surrounding community?

The results of the student surveys in October 2008 and again in May 2009 found that overall student perception of safety in their school and in the neighbourhood surrounding the school did not improve.

However, almost all students at both times said they felt safe in their school (91% and 90%, respectively). Similarly, while there was no change in how safe students said they felt in the neighbourhood around their school, most students at both the beginning and end of the school year said they felt safe (85% at both times).

Were student perceptions of safety affected by actual interaction or frequency of interaction with the SRO?

Perceptions of safety for students who had informally talked with the SRO or had approached the SRO to talk about a problem they were having during the year were compared with those for students who said they had not talked with or approached the SRO.

It was found that those students who had informally talked to the SRO were significantly more likely to say that they felt safe in school (92%) than those who had not informally talked to the officer (89%)⁹. However, talking informally to the SRO during the school year had no significant effect on perception of safety in the neighbourhood around the school.

Those students who approached the SRO to talk about a problem they were having at school, however, were significantly more likely to say they did not feel safe in school (18%), than those students who had not approached the officer (9%)¹⁰. As well, the students who had approached the SRO to talk about a problem were significantly more likely to say they did not feel safe in the neighbourhood around the school (27%) than students who had not approached the SRO (14%)¹¹.

Finally, the frequency with which students approached the SRO to talk about a problem they were having did not significantly affect their perceptions of safety in school, although there was a tendency for those who approached the officer often to say they felt less safe. The frequency of approaching the SRO to talk about a problem also had no significant affect on student perception of safety in the neighbourhood around the school.

Were student perceptions of safety affected by student opinion of the SRO?

Student opinion as to whether having an SRO assigned to their school was a good or bad idea was found to have a significant effect on perceptions of safety in school. Those students who thought that having an SRO assigned to their school was a good idea were more likely to say that they felt safe in school (91%), while those who thought it was a bad idea were more likely to say they did not feel safe (18%)¹². Student opinion of the SRO had no significant effect on perception of safety in the neighbourhood around the school.

Did the School Resource Officer improve student comfort with police and/ or willingness to report crimes to police?

There was an increase in reporting by those students who had been victim of a crime: while 16% in both October 2008 and May 2009 said they had been the victim of a crime during the past school year, 23% of these students in the October survey said that they had reported it to an officer, while 27% in the May survey said they had reported the crime to the SRO or another officer.

There was not a similar increase in reporting to police when students had witnessed a crime. In October, 28% said they had witnessed a crime during the past school year, however, of these students, only 11% said they reported what they had witnessed to the police. While

⁹ $\chi^2=5.8, p<0.05$

¹⁰ $\chi^2=28.9, p<0.01$

¹¹ $\chi^2=20.9, p<0.01$

¹² $\chi^2=19.0, p<0.01$

more students in May said they had witnessed a crime (35%), again only 10% said they reported what they had seen to the SRO or another officer.

Was student willingness to report crimes affected by actual interaction or frequency of interaction with the SRO?

Willingness to report victimization or a crime witnessed was compared for students who had informally talked with the SRO or had approached the SRO to talk about a problem they were having during the year, and for those students who said they had not talked with or approached the SRO.

It was found that those students who had informally talked to the SRO were significantly more likely to have reported being a victim of crime to the SRO (31%) than those who had not informally talked to the officer (9%)¹³. Those students who had informally talked to the SRO during the school year were also significantly more likely to have reported a crime they witnessed to the SRO (13%) than those who had not informally talked to the officer (4%)¹⁴.

Those students who approached the SRO to talk about a problem they were having at school were also significantly more likely to report a crime that happened to them to the SRO (61%) than those students who had not approached the officer (8%)¹⁵. And again, the students who had approached the SRO to talk about a problem were significantly more likely to report to the SRO a crime they had witnessed (30%) than those students who had not approached the SRO (5%)¹⁶.

However, the frequency with which students approached the SRO to talk about a problem they were having did not significantly affect their willingness to report to the SRO when they were the victim of or witnessed a crime.

Was student willingness to report crimes affected by student opinion of the SRO?

Student opinion as to whether having an SRO assigned to their school was a good or bad idea was found to have a significant effect on willingness to report to the SRO when they were victim of or witness to a crime. Those students who thought that having an SRO assigned to their school was a good idea were significantly more likely to report to the SRO when they were victims of crime (21%) than students who thought the SRO was a bad idea (17%)¹⁷. In contrast, those students who thought the SRO was a bad idea were significantly more likely to report to the SRO a crime they had witnessed than students who thought the SRO was a good idea (8%)¹⁸.

¹³ $\chi^2=39.6$, $p<0.01$

¹⁴ $\chi^2=30.1$, $p<0.01$

¹⁵ $\chi^2=148.4$, $p<0.01$

¹⁶ $\chi^2=91.2$, $p<0.01$

¹⁷ $\chi^2=6.1$, $p<0.05$

¹⁸ $\chi^2=12.2$, $p<0.01$

Did the School Resource Officer improve school administrator perceptions of safety in the school and the surrounding community?

The results of the school administrator/teacher surveys in October 2008 and again in May 2009 found that overall perception of safety in school and in the neighbourhood surrounding the school did not improve.

However, almost all administrators and teachers at both times said they felt safe in their school (98% and 96%, respectively). Similarly, while there was no change in how safe administrators and teachers said they felt in the neighbourhood around their school, most at both the beginning and end of the school year said they felt safe (95% at both times).

Did the School Resource Officer improve parent perceptions of safety in the school and the surrounding community?

The results of the parent surveys in October 2008 and again in May 2009 found that overall perception of their child's safety in school and in the neighbourhood surrounding the school did improve.

Again, most parents at both times said they felt their child was safe in school, with the proportion increasing from October to May (85% and 90%, respectively). Similarly, the proportion of parents who said they felt their child was safe in the neighbourhood around their school increased from the beginning to the end of the school year (78% and 84%, respectively).

Did the School Resource Officer decrease crimes and victimization on school grounds?

As noted previously, changes in the number of offences and victims between the 2007/08 and the 2008/09 school years at SRO schools were investigated both by proximity to the school and by time of day. Offences were counted both within the school/on school grounds and within 200 metres of the school, and they were counted over all hours (Monday through Sunday), during school hours (7 a.m.–4 p.m. Monday through Friday), and not during school hours (4 p.m.–7 a.m. Monday through Friday).

Compared with the previous school year, in 2008/09, there were decreases in reported offences both on school grounds and within 200 metres of the school, over all the times examined. With regard to victimization, compared with the previous school year, in 2008/09, there were fewer victims on school grounds at all times examined. When the geographic area for reported victimizations was expanded to 200 meters around the school, however, there were fewer victims over all hours and outside of school hours, but there were more victims during school hours.

More detailed information on the results of the student, administrator/teacher, and parent surveys, and on the crime and victimization data, is provided in the sections that follow.

Student Surveys

Almost 7,000 surveys (6,960) were delivered for distribution to students in October 2008 and again in May 2009. A total of 4,118 surveys were returned in 2008, and 3,553 surveys were returned in 2009, for response rates of 59% and 51%, respectively.¹⁹

In each survey, about one-quarter of the surveys came from each grade, 9-12; about half the surveys were completed by male students, half by female students; and about 30% came from schools in the Toronto Catholic District School Board, 70% from schools in the Toronto District School Board. In both surveys, over half of the respondents said they came from neighbourhoods with no or a little bit of crime (57% in October, 59% in May).

Thoughts on Safety:

Students were asked how safe they felt in and around school during the day. Little difference was seen in responses from the beginning to the end of the school year, with almost all students saying they felt very or reasonably safe at both times (91% and 90%, respectively) (Figure 2).

Students at both times were more likely to say they felt safe in/around their school than in the neighbourhood around their school. However, there was again no change in how safe students said they felt in the neighbourhood around their school during the day. Most students at both the beginning and end of the school year said they felt very or reasonably safe (85% at both times) (Figure 3).

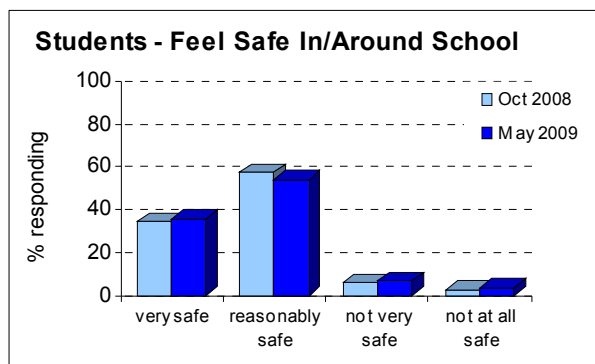


Figure 2

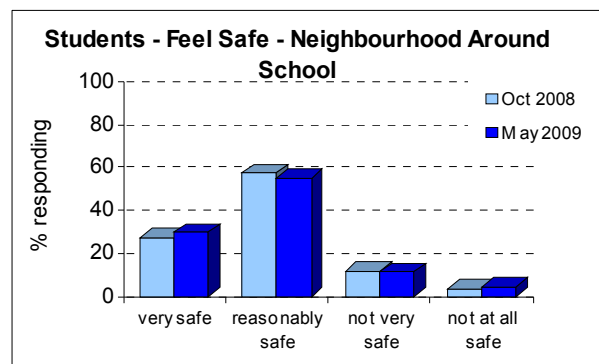


Figure 3

¹⁹ For samples of these sizes, the results are considered accurate within $\pm 1.5\%$, 95 times out of 100.

In keeping with the general feeling of safety in school, the largest proportion of students at both times said that they never had trouble concentrating during class because they felt unsafe, with the proportion increasing at the end of the school year (56% in October 2008, 60% in May 2009). Only about 4% at both times said they found it hard to concentrate in class most or all of the time because they felt unsafe.

Over half of students at both the beginning and the end of the school year felt that their school and school grounds were not very or not at all violent (61% in October 2008, 59% in May 2009) (Figure 4). Just over one-third of students at both times felt their school was somewhat violent (35% in October 2008, 37% in May 2009).

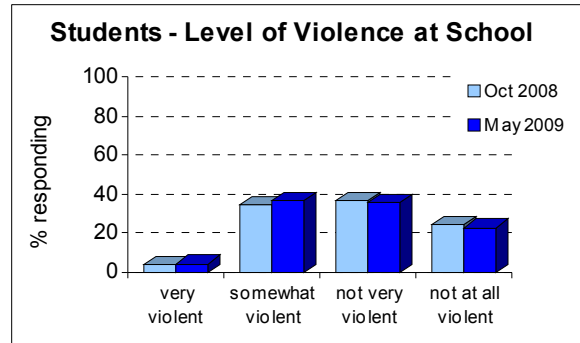


Figure 4

Students were asked to rate how serious they thought some problems were at their school. As can be seen in Figure 5, there was again little change in their opinions from the beginning to the end of the school year, with 'kids hanging out in the hall between classes' showing the most change (an increase). The problems students felt were most serious at both times were drugs and being robbed.

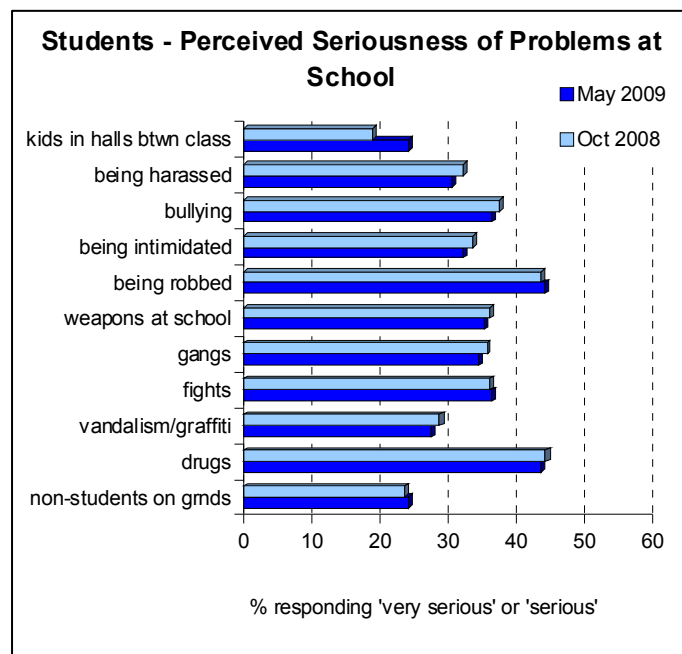


Figure 5

Students were also asked how often they worried about certain things at school and in their neighbourhood. As can be seen in Figure 6, there was again little change in how often they said they worried about the different issues from the beginning to the end of the school year, with worry about ‘being beaten up in your neighbourhood’ and ‘gangs in your neighbourhood’ showing the most change (both decreasing). The problems students worried about most at both times were ‘having something stolen at school’ (theft), ‘being robbed at school’, and ‘gangs in your neighbourhood’.

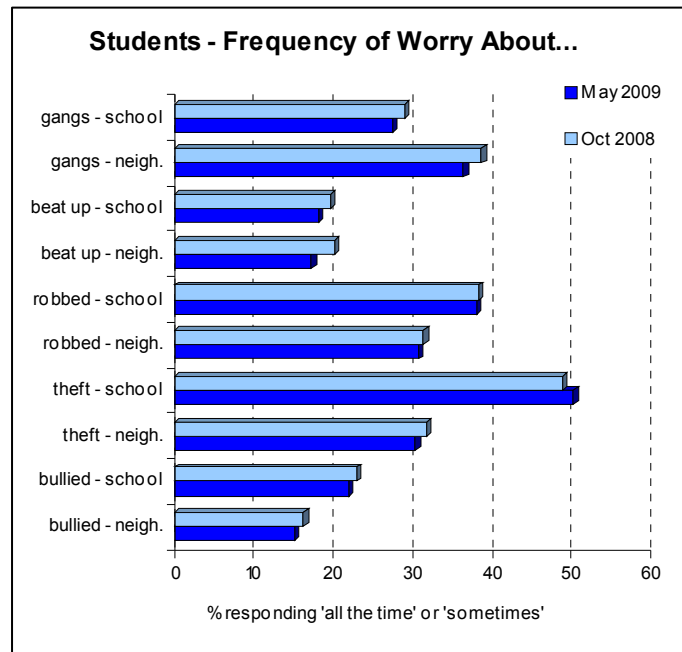


Figure 6

In October 2008, three-quarters of students (76%) said they thought there would be no times during the school year that they avoided going to school because they were afraid of getting hurt. In May 2009, most students (87%) said in fact that they hadn't avoided going to school during the year because they were afraid of getting hurt. While 10% of students thought at the beginning of the school year that they might avoid school 1-3 times because they were afraid of getting hurt, at the end of the school year, only 7% said they had actually avoided school 1-3 times for that reason.

Students were asked a similar question regarding being bullied. In October 2008, just over three-quarters of students (78%) said they thought there would be no times during the school year that they avoided going to school because they were afraid of being bullied or picked on. In May 2009, most students (88%) said in fact that they hadn't avoided going to school during the year because they were afraid of being bullied or picked on. While 9% of students thought at the beginning of the school year that they might avoid school 1-3 times because they were afraid of being bullied, at the end of the school year, only 6% said they had actually avoided school 1-3 times for that reason.

Thoughts on Police and the SRO Program:

The perceived relationship between students and police improved during the school year. While over half of students at the beginning and the end of the school year felt that the relationship between the police and students at their school was good or excellent, the proportion was higher at the year end (56% in October, 67% in May) (Figure 7). In particular, the proportion of students who felt the relationship between police and students was excellent, increased from 16% to 29%.

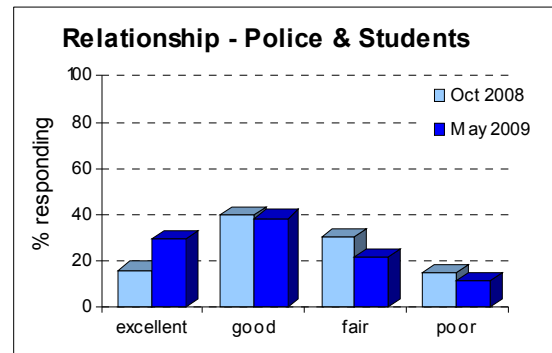


Figure 7

When asked what they thought about having a School Resource Officer assigned to their school, the largest proportion of students at both times thought that it was a very good idea or okay, with little change over the school year (69% in October 2008, 71% in May 2009). Fewer than 10% of students at both times thought that having a SRO assigned to their school was a bad or very bad idea (9% in October, 7% in May). The most common reason given was that their school did not need the officer.

Almost half of students in October 2008 (48%) said that they wanted the SRO to make presentations to one of their classes; just over one-third in May 2009 (36%) said that the SRO had actually made presentations to one of their classes. The topics students most frequently wanted presentations on included: personal safety, how to make the school safer, and what to do if you feel unsafe; how to deal with bullying; drugs; weapons and violence; gangs; dealing with harassment; the consequences of crime/breaking the law; how to deal with peer pressure; stealing/robbery; and why the SRO is there and what he/she intends to do.

Just over half of students (55%) at the beginning of the school year said that the SRO coaching a school sports team was a very good or okay idea; just under one-quarter of students (24%) at the end of the school year said the SRO had coached a school sports team – most of these students (81%) thought it was a very good/okay idea.

Similarly, just over half of students in October 2008 said that the SRO heading up an extra-curricular activity/club as a very good/okay idea, while in May 2009, just under one-third of students (31%) said that the SRO had headed up an extra-curricular activity/club. Again, most of these students (80%) thought that this was a very good/okay idea.

While a large proportion of students at both times felt the SRO helped deal with problems and improved safety, students were more positive about the possible impact of the SRO at the beginning of the school year. Just over three-quarters of students (76%) in October 2008 thought that having an SRO assigned to the school would help deal with any problems there. In May 2009, just over two-thirds (69%) said that having the SRO at their school had helped deal with problems there. Similarly, just over three-quarters of students in October (76%) said that having the SRO assigned to their school would make their school safer; 71% of students in May said that having the SRO had made their school safer.

In October 2008, students were asked how comfortable they thought they would be just talking informally with the SRO: most (79%) said very or somewhat comfortable. In May 2009, just over one-third of students (36%) said they actually did talk informally with the SRO; of these, almost all (92%) said they felt very or somewhat comfortable. About half (52%) of the students who talked with the SRO said they only talked to him/her once or twice; one-third (33%) said they talked to the officer at least once a week.

Students were asked in October 2008 how comfortable they felt they would be approaching the SRO to talk about a problem they were having at school: just under two-thirds (63%) said that they felt they would be very or somewhat comfortable. When asked if they thought they would actually approach the SRO if they had a problem during the year, almost half (49%) said they didn't know, while 27% said they would. At the end of the school year, 8% of students said they had approached the SRO to talk about a problem they were having at school, and most (85%) felt comfortable doing so.

When students were asked in October 2008 if they thought they would approach the SRO if they were the victim of a crime during the school year, the largest response was evenly split between 'yes' (41%) and 'don't know' (41%). Fewer than one in five students (16%) said that they had been the victim of a crime during the past school year. The most frequent responses regarding the type of crime were 'someone stole money or things from me worth more than \$50' (44%), 'someone stole money or things from me worth less than \$50' (38%), and 'someone threatened to hurt me' (34%). Only 23% of those who had been victimized said they had reported it to the police.

In May 2009, students were again asked if they had been the victim of a crime during this past school year, and again, 16% said 'yes'. The three most frequent responses regarding the type of crime, were also the same as those given the previous fall, in roughly the same proportions. There was, however, a small increase in the proportion of victimized students who said they'd reported the crime to police: 27% said they reported the crime to the SRO or another officer. Most of these students (81%) said they felt comfortable reporting to an officer. For those students who had not been the victim of a crime during the school year, 35% said that if they had been victimized, they would have gone to the SRO; however, more (43%) said they didn't know if they would go to the SRO.

Students were also asked about what they would do if they witnessed a crime during the school year. Fewer students said they thought they would approach the SRO if they witnessed a crime than if they had been victimized themselves. In October 2008, 32% said they would approach the SRO, while 49% said they didn't know. Students were also more likely to have been witnesses than victims: 28% said they had witnessed a crime during the past school year. Just under two-thirds of these students (65%) said they had witnessed someone beating someone else up, while just over half (53%) said they saw someone threatening to hurt someone else, and just under half (47%) said they saw someone damaging property or things on purpose. Only 11% reported what they had witnessed to the police.

More students in May than in October said that they had witnessed a crime: 35% said they had witnessed a crime during the school year. The three most frequent responses regarding the type of crime witnessed, were the same as those given the previous fall, and again in roughly the same proportions. The proportion of these students who reported what they witnessed to the police was relatively unchanged: only 10% said they reported what they had seen to the SRO or another officer. Again, of those who reported to an officer, most (82%) said they felt comfortable doing so. For those students who had not witnessed a crime during the school year, 35% said that if they had, they would have gone to the SRO; again, however, more students (45%) said they didn't know if they would go to the SRO.

The proportions of students who said they were the victim of a crime and reported the victimization to police, or witnessed a crime and reported what they had witnessed to police, in October 2008 and May 2009, are summarized in Figure 8.

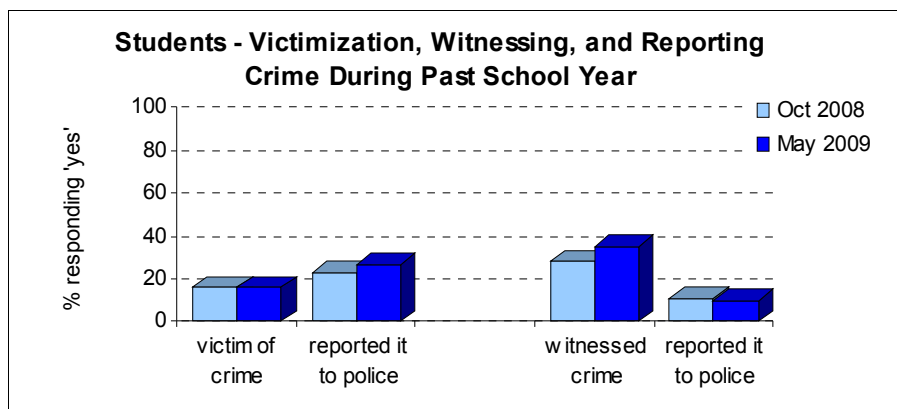


Figure 8

Reasons given by students for why they wouldn't or didn't feel comfortable approaching an officer varied slightly during the school year. While not wanting to be a snitch and saying that talking to police officers made them nervous were common reasons in both October and May, other frequent reasons differed. At the beginning of the school year, students also said they wouldn't feel comfortable talking to or approaching the SRO because they didn't like talking about their problems and they didn't want others to think they were a snitch. At the end of the school year, however, the students also said that they weren't comfortable talking to or reporting a crime to the SRO because the police always think people have done something wrong, even if they haven't.

And finally, while only 18% of students said in October 2008 that they thought they would work with the SRO to address an issue or solve a problem at their school, only 9% in May 2009 said they had actually done so.

School Resource Officer Survey

Twenty of the SROs provided their feedback on the program in the June 2009 survey.²⁰

Three-quarters (75%) of the SROs said that when they first arrived at their assigned schools, they felt like the staff treated them as part of the school management team. By the end of the school year, this increased to 83%.

A large proportion of the SROs (70%) felt that there were conditions or features in their school environment that made it easier for them to perform their duties, with the most frequently mentioned conditions involving supportive/positive relationships with the school administration and/or teachers. Just under two-thirds of the SROs, however, said there were also conditions or features in their school environment that made it challenging for them to perform their duties. Examples of these challenges included: unwelcoming or isolated office space, little information sharing or involvement with the school administration, and limited participation by the ESP advisor.

There were also, for half (50%) of the SROs, issues at their divisions that made it challenging for them to perform their duties. Examples of these challenges included: lack of vehicles, lack of divisional officer understanding of the SRO's role, and the 8-hour shift schedule made it difficult to participate in before or after school activities.

When asked what strategies or methods worked best for establishing, maintaining, strengthening their working relationships with school staff, answers fell into two general areas: officer attitude/approach and making an effort to become part of the school environment. Examples of specific answers included: communicating, asking for teacher input and including them in programs, being willing to participate in school activities/events, following up when commitments were made, attending staff meetings, helping in classrooms, being visible in the halls, and being friendly and positive rather than overbearing or pushy.

When asked what strategies or methods worked best for establishing, maintaining, strengthening their working relationships with students, answers tended to focus more particularly on officer attitude/approach. Examples of specific answers included: showing them respect, being approachable and non-authoritarian, being positive, being available, being visible in the halls and at lunch, mentoring, considering their needs, getting involved in activities/events, remembering student names, listening as well as talking, informal conversation, and following up on commitments and promises made.

Three-quarters (75%) of the SROs said that they were able to get students involved in initiatives or activities that would help make their school safer. Examples of strategies that the SROs felt worked best for getting students involved included: being part of or working with ESP, offering prize incentives, identifying conscientious, popular students to promote and lead events, developing programs/activities that used their interests to communicate the message, and combining the safety initiative with a 'fun' activity.

The SROs did, however, also note several challenges to getting students involved or to participate in events/activities. These included students not wanting to be seen involved with police, trying to

²⁰ Proportions shown are of those who answered the question.

maintain student interest, not having an effective ESP program, lack of trust in the SRO in the beginning, competing activities and programs in the school, and students not being able to commit to initiatives due to prior after-school commitments (e.g. part-time job, caring for siblings).

However, all of the SROs felt that by the end of the year students were more comfortable talking to them, and most SROs (95%) felt that students were more comfortable coming to them with a problem. This perception of improved comfort was also reflected in very positive perceptions of the relationships between the SROs, students, staff, and the school administration.

By the end of the school year, almost all of the SROs felt that, in general, their relationship with students, staff, and the school administration was excellent or good (95%, 94%, and 95%, respectively) (Figure 9). In particular, about two-thirds of the SROs felt that, in general, their relationship with students, school staff, and the school administration was excellent (63%, 68%, and 63%, respectively).

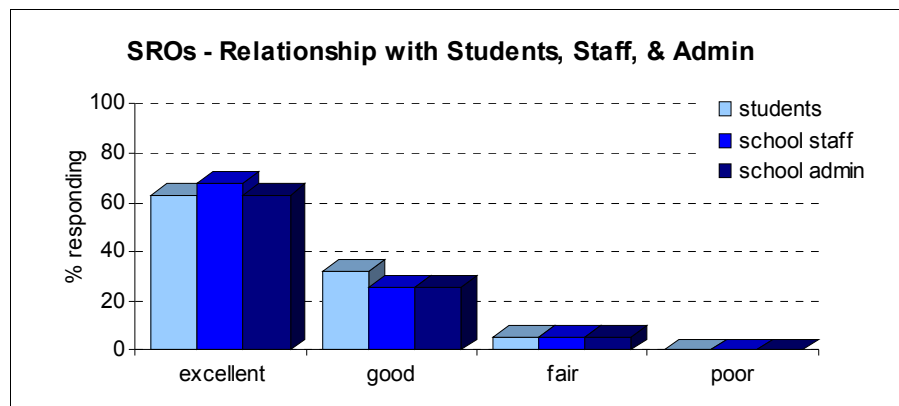


Figure 9

All of the SROs felt that safety in and around the school during the day improved during the school year; almost two-thirds (65%) felt that safety had improved very much, while 30% felt that it had improved somewhat. The perception of improved safety extended beyond the school: almost all (90%) of the SROs also felt that safety in the neighbourhood around the school during the day improved during the school year; 28% felt it had improved very much, while 61% felt it had improved somewhat. Just under three-quarters (72%) of the SROs said that they weren't aware of any other school procedures or policies that had changed during the year to improve school safety.

Many of the SROs (70%) said they would have liked to have been given access to additional training or information during the year. Specifically, the additional training desired included: drug investigations/enforcement; interviewing; effective presentation; coaching; relevant legislation (e.g. Education Act, Youth Criminal Justice Act); anger management, conflict management; threat assessment; using the Internet as an investigative tool; provincial SRO training; and the general investigators course.

The SROs were asked what they considered their greatest accomplishments during the past school year. Responses included:

- Developing positive relationships/connections with students (including high-risk students) and with staff/administration.
- Reaching out to some of the kids that were perceived as troubled kids and making inroads with youth who did not trust the police.

- Developing programs/activities for students.
- Speaking in classrooms/helping to teach the law class.
- Mediating at discipline discussions with VPs, students, and parents.
- Enforcing the law and being involved in investigations and arrests while maintaining positive relations with students and staff.
- Mentoring students.
- Seeing growth in some of the students.
- Helping coach or coaching sports teams.
- With the school's Child & Youth Worker, bringing together two groups of youth who were in conflict throughout the school year to work things out.

Most of the SROs commented that the experience had been very worthwhile, effective, and positive for both themselves and the kids; many hoped to continue in the position.

SRO Activity Sheets

As noted previously, in addition to the June 2009 survey, SROs were asked to complete and submit an activity sheet for each day they were at their assigned school. During the 2008/09 school year, 3,801 activity sheets were submitted by the 29 SROs.²¹

SROs most frequently indicated that they spent 7 hours at their assigned school during a shift (13%), followed by 6 hours (12%), 5 hours (12%), and 4 hours (10%). Times ranged from no hours to more than 10 hours. Not including students, during their shift, the officers were most likely to have had contact with the school administration (71%) and teachers (64%). Most officers said this contact generally involved providing information or informal conversation.

Almost all the activity sheets (90%) indicated that the SROs had contact with a student or students during their shift. The officers generally said that more than half of their shift involved contact with students: almost two-thirds of the activity sheets (64%) indicated that the officers spent 50% of their time or more with students. When asked to describe their interaction with students, the most frequent answers were 'general greetings in hallway' (63%) and 'approached by students about a specific issue/incident' (38%). Just over one-third of the activity sheets indicated that during their shift, the SRO dealt with a problematic situation that could have become a reportable incident.

The activity sheets indicated relatively infrequent SRO involvement in ESP or PEACE, presentations about bullying/cyber-bullying or Crime Stoppers, involvement in risk assessment and/or threat assessment activities, involvement in Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) or safety audit activities, or participation with the school council or other school/parent/ community associations.

Very few activity sheets indicated that the SROs encountered obstacles to performing their activities/responsibilities. In specifying the type of obstacle encountered, the most frequent response was Police Service rather than school-related: the lack of vehicle/ transportation.

²¹ Proportions shown are of those who answered the question.

School Administrator/Teacher Surveys

A total of 319 surveys were delivered to school administrators and teachers October 2008 and again in May 2009. In October, 194 surveys were returned (a response rate of 61%), while in May, 170 surveys were returned (a response rate of 53%). Roughly three-quarters of the respondents at both times were teachers.

Thoughts on Safety:

School administrators and teachers were asked how safe they felt in and around school during the day. Little difference was seen in responses from the beginning to the end of the school year, with almost all saying they felt very or reasonably safe at both times (98% and 96%, respectively) (Figure 10).

Administrators and teachers at both times were more likely to say they felt safe in/around the school than in the neighbourhood around the school. However, there was again little change in how safe they said they felt in the neighbourhood around the school during the day. Almost all administrators and teachers at both the beginning and end of the school year said they felt very or reasonably safe (95% and 94%, respectively (Figure 11).

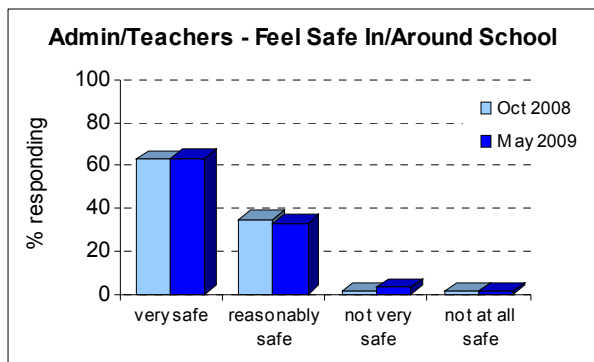


Figure 10

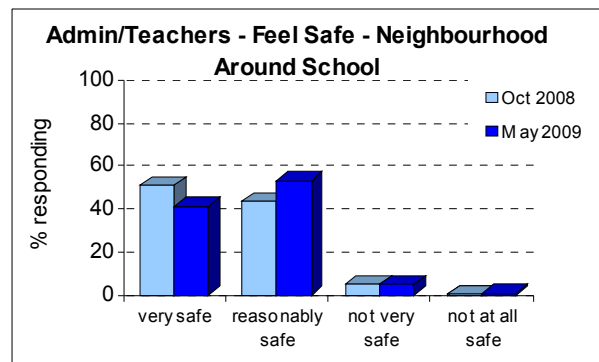


Figure 11

Over half of administrators and teachers at both the beginning and the end of the school year felt that the school and school grounds were not very or not at all violent (64% in October 2008, 68% in May 2009) (Figure 12). Roughly one-third at both times felt the school was somewhat violent (36% in October, 31% in May).

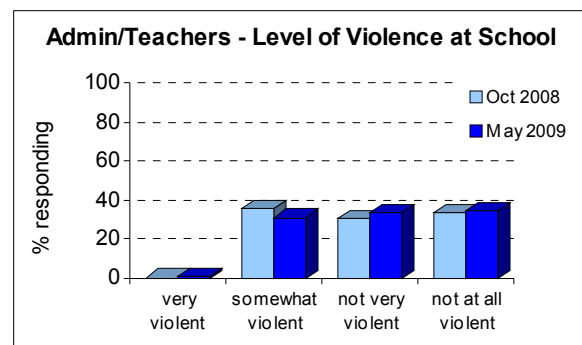


Figure 12

In October 2008 and again in May 2009, school administrators and teachers were asked to rate how serious they thought some problems were at their school. As can be seen in Figure 13, while the differences were generally not large, six of the eleven issues were seen as more serious at the end of the school year than at the beginning, with 'drugs' showing the most increase. The problem administrators and teachers felt was most serious at both times was 'kids hanging out in the hall between classes'.

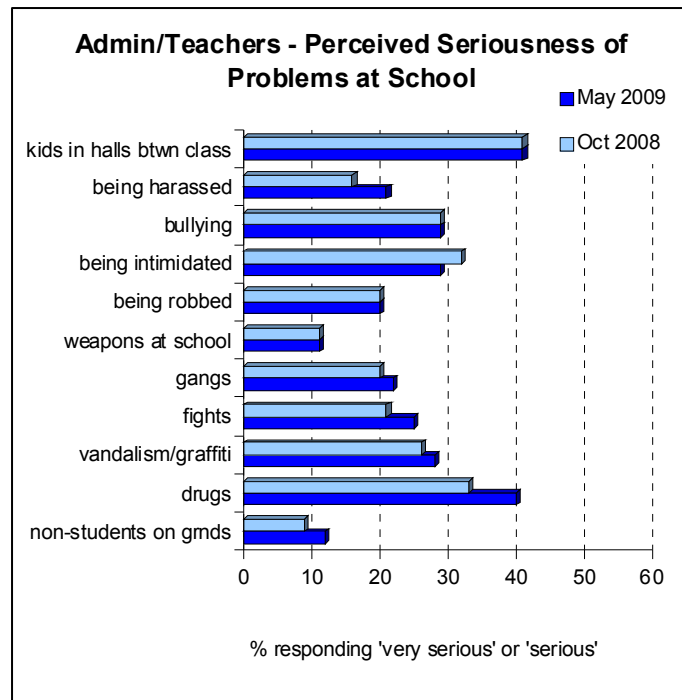


Figure 13

Administrators and teachers were also asked how often they worried about certain things at school and in the neighbourhood. As can be seen in Figure 14, only one issue showed an increase from the beginning to the end of the school year: worry about 'kids being bullied or picked on at school'. All other issues showed no change or slight decreases. The administrators and teachers consistently worried more about students than themselves or other staff members. At both times, administrators/teachers worried most about 'kids having something stolen at school' (theft) and 'kids being bullied or picked on at school'.

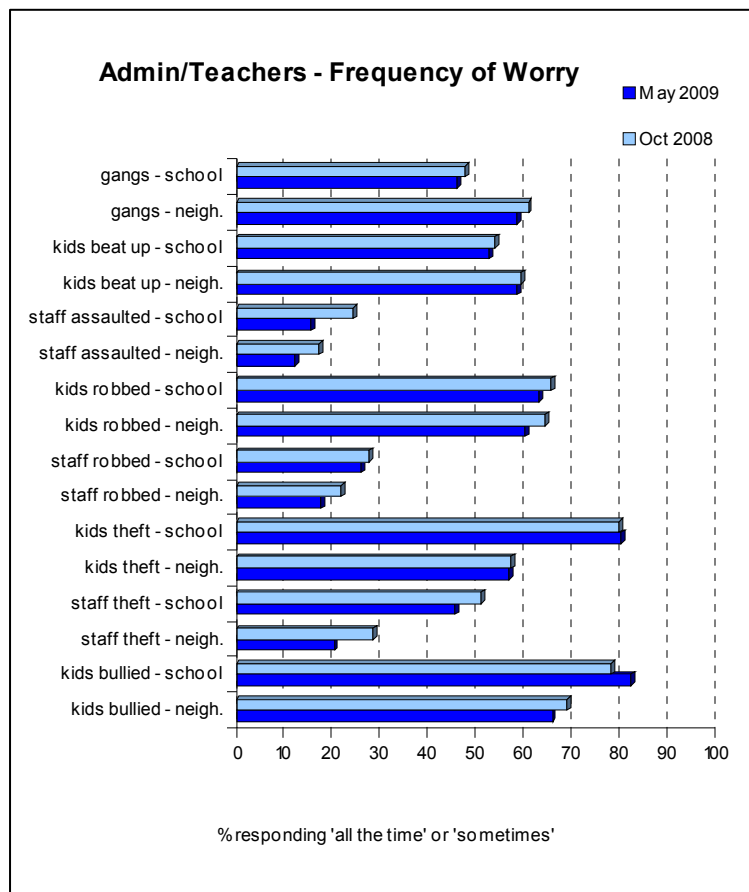


Figure 14

Thoughts on Police and the SRO Program:

Most administrators and teachers believed that the relationship between the police and students in their school was excellent or good, with the proportion increasing during the school year (63% in October 2008, 78% in May 2009) (Figure 15). In particular, the proportion who felt the relationship between police and students was excellent, increased from 22% to 37%.

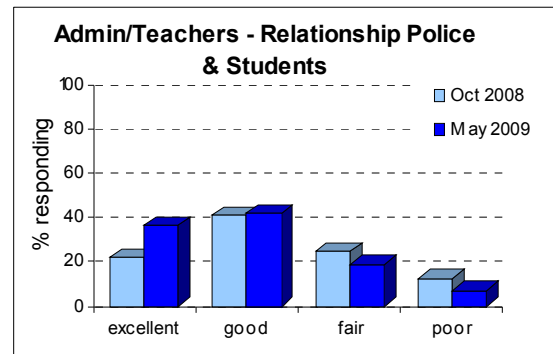


Figure 15

While more administrators and teachers felt the relationship between the police and the staff/administration was good or excellent, in contrast to the perceived relationship with students, this proportion decreased over the school year (89% in October, 86% in May) (Figure 16). And in contrast to their perception of the police relationship with students, the proportion of admin/teachers who felt the police relationship with school staff was excellent decreased slightly from 55% to 49%.

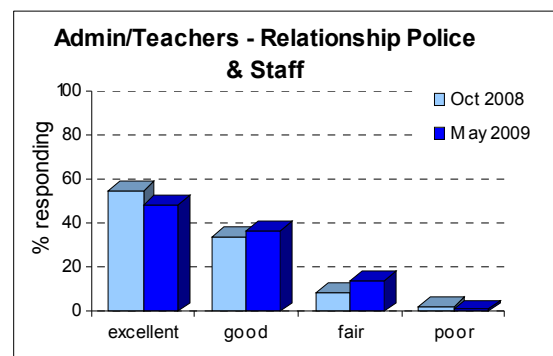


Figure 16

Most administrators and teachers were, however, positive about having an SRO assigned to their school, with the proportion increasing over the school year. In October 2008, 88% thought that having an SRO assigned to their school was a very good or okay idea. In May 2009, this increased to 91%. Fewer than 10% at both times thought that having a SRO assigned to their school was a bad or very bad idea (5% in October, 8% in May). The most common reason given was that the school did not need the officer/that other schools needed the police more.

When asked in October 2008 whether they thought that having the SRO at their school would make the school safer, 83% said yes. When asked in May 2009 whether they thought the SRO had in fact made the school safer, fewer – 77% – said yes.

Most administrators/teachers (93%) said in October that they thought they’d feel comfortable in approaching the SRO to talk about a problem that a student was having at school. In May, almost half of administrators/teachers (49%) said that they had approached the SRO about a problem a student was having, and almost all of these (99%) said they felt comfortable doing so.

Similarly, at the beginning of the school year, most administrators and teachers (92%) said that they would encourage their students to talk to the SRO if they had a problem or were the victim of or witness to a crime. Just over three-quarters of administrators and teachers (76%) said in May 2009 that they had actually done so.

Fewer administrators/teachers than thought said they had actually used the SRO as a resource during the school year. In October, 79% said that they would use the SRO as a resource when dealing

with problems that arise at the school. In May, however, only 60% said they actually had used the SRO as a resource for dealing with problems.

Parent Surveys

Of the 4,350 surveys sent or provided to parents in October 2008, 459 were returned (11%). Of the 4,350 surveys sent in May 2009, 298 were returned (7%).^{22,23} Roughly three-quarters of both surveys were completed by mothers.

Thoughts on Safety:

Most parents felt that their child was safe at school at the start of the school year, and this perception improved: in October 2008, 85% of responding parents said they felt their child was very or reasonably safe in and around the school during the day; this increased to 90% of parents in May 2009 (Figure 17). Most parents at both times felt their child was ‘reasonably’ rather the ‘very’ safe.

Similarly, parents felt their children’s safety in the neighbourhood around the school improved as well, although the neighbourhood was not felt to be as safe as the school. In October, 78% of parents said they felt their child was very or reasonably safe in the neighbourhood around the school during the day; this increased to 84% in May (Figure 18). Again, most parents at both times felt their child was ‘reasonably’ rather the ‘very’ safe.

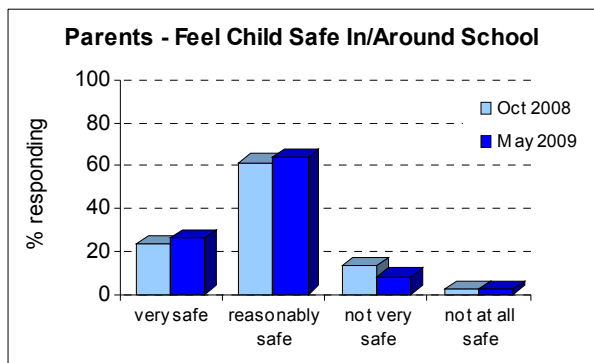


Figure 17

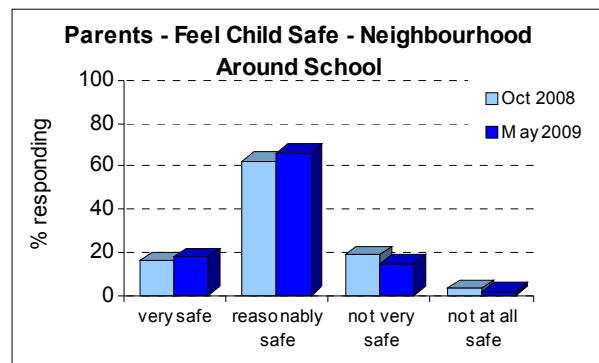


Figure 18

²² For samples of these sizes, the results are considered accurate within about ±5%, 95 times out of 100.

²³ Proportions shown are of those who answered the question.

In addition to the questions about safety in the school and in the neighbourhood around the school, parents were asked how often they thought their child worried about a number of issues. As can be seen in Figure 19, there was little change from the beginning to the end of the school year in how often parents said they thought their child worried about many of the issues. Worry about 'being beaten up in at school' and about 'being beaten up in your neighbourhood' showed the most change, with parents believing that their children worried less about these issues in May 2009 than in October 2008. It should be noted, however, that at both times, parents thought that their children worried most about 'having something stolen at school' (theft), and this perception increased over the school year.

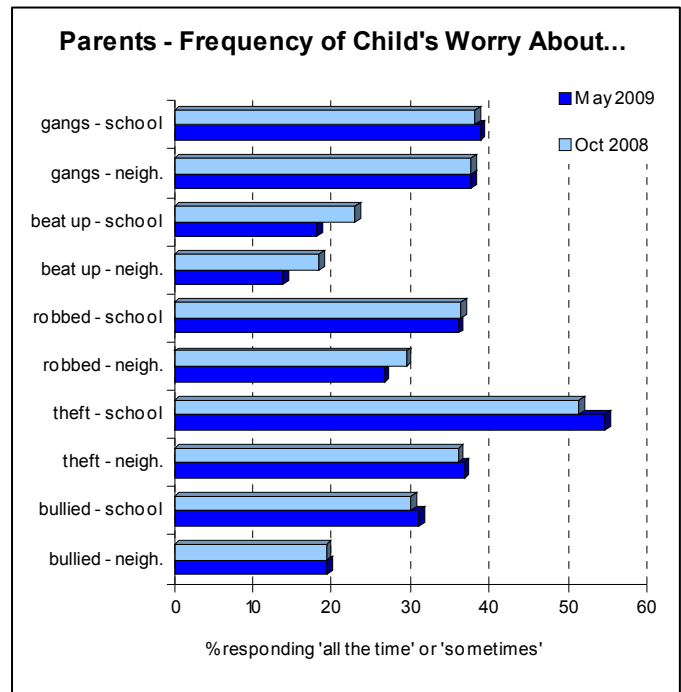


Figure 19

Most parents (82%) in October 2008 said that they believed their child had never avoided going to school because they were afraid of getting hurt; 3% of parents said they thought their child had avoided school four times or more in the past school year. In May 2009, both these proportions had improved: 88% of parents said they believed their child had never avoided going to school in this school year because they were afraid of being hurt, and only 1% said they thought their child had avoided school four times or more.

Responses were similar when parents were asked about school avoidance due to fear of being bullied or picked on. Most parents (80%) in October said that they believed their child had never avoided school in the past year because they were afraid of being bullied, while 3% said their child had avoided school four times or more. In May, 85% of parents said that they believed their child had never avoided school in this school year because they were afraid of being bullied, while 3% said their child had avoided school four times or more.

Thoughts on Police and the SRO Program:

Parents at both the beginning and end of the school year felt positively about having an SRO assigned to their child's school. In both October 2008 and May 2009, almost all parents said they thought it was a very good or okay idea (93% and 94%, respectively). Only 2% of parents at both times felt that having an SRO assigned to their child's school was a bad idea.

However, slightly fewer parents at the end of the school year felt that the SRO had made their child's school safer. In October, most parents (94%) said they thought that having the SRO at their child's school would make it safer. In May, 89% of parents thought that the SRO actually had made the school safer.

In October 2008, parents were asked how comfortable they thought they would feel approaching the SRO to talk about a problem their child was having at school. Almost all parents (92%) thought they would feel comfortable approaching the officer. In May 2009, 6% of parents said they had approached the SRO about a problem their child was having. Of these parents, most (89%) felt comfortable doing so.

Similarly, almost all parents (92%) said at the beginning of the school year that they thought they would feel comfortable approaching the SRO to report a crime that happened to their child. By the end of the school year, 3% of parents actually had approached the SRO to report a crime that had happened to their child, while a further 3% reported the crime to another officer. Of the parents who reported a crime, 88% said they felt comfortable doing so. For those parents whose child had not been victim of a crime, just under three-quarters (73%) said they would have approached the SRO if their child had been victimized.

At the start of the school year, most parents (89%) said that they would encourage their child to talk to the SRO if they had a problem or were the victim of or witness to a crime. In May 2009, just under three-quarters of parents (73%) said they had actually done so.

Similarly, almost two-thirds (63%) of parents said in October 2008 that they would be willing to work with the SRO to address an issue or solve a problem at their child's school. In May 2009, 3% of parents said they had actually done so.

Crime and Victimization Data

As noted previously, changes in the number of offences and victimization at schools with an SRO between the 2007/08 school year and the 2008/09 school year were investigated both by proximity to the school and by time of day. Offences were counted both within the school/on school grounds and within 200 metres of the school, and they were counted over all hours (Monday through Sunday), during school hours (7 a.m.–4 p.m. Monday through Friday), and not during school hours (4 p.m.–7 a.m. Monday through Friday).

Offences On School Grounds Only:

Over all hours, offences were reported at eight of the 29 schools in both 2008/09 and 2007/08; six of these schools were noted in both years. However, the number of offences reported in 2008/09 was 21.3% lower than the number of offences reported during the previous school year. In both school years, the most frequently reported offences were assault, threatening, theft, robbery, and mischief. However, while the number of assault, threatening, theft, and mischief offences decreased, the number of robbery offences increased.

During school hours, offences were reported at only two schools in 2007/08. No offences were reported during school hours at any of the 29 schools during the 2008/09 school year. The offences reported in 2007/08 were assault and mischief.

After school hours, offences were reported at six of the schools in 2007/08 and at eight of the schools in 2008/09 (the same six schools as in the previous year, plus two new ones). Again, however, the number of offences reported decreased by 21.3% between the school years. Assault,

threatening, theft, robbery, and mischief were the most frequently reported crimes in both years, however, robbery was reported more frequently than theft in 2008/09. Further, while the number of assault, theft, and mischief offences decreased between the two school years, the number of threatening and robbery offences reported remained the same.

Offences On School Grounds or Within 200 Metres of the School:

Over all hours, offences were reported at or around 28 of the schools in 2007/08 and in or around all 29 schools in 2008/09. Even with the expanded area of examination, however, the number of reported offences decreased 14.7% between the two school years. In 2007/08, the most frequently reported offences were assault, theft, threatening, shoplifting, and mischief and theft from vehicle (same numbers reported). In 2008/09, the most frequently reported offences were assault, theft, threatening, robbery, and theft from vehicle. While the number of assault, theft, and threatening offences went down in 2008/09, the number of robbery and theft from vehicle offences went up.

During school hours, offences were reported at or around 22 schools in both years, with 18 of the schools noted in both years. While there was a decrease seen from 2007/08 to 2008/09, it was only a very slight 1.4% decrease. The offences most frequently reported in or around the school during school hours in 2007/08 were break & enter, assault, theft, shoplifting, and theft of vehicle. In 2008/09, the most frequently reported offences were break & enter, assault, robbery, theft, and theft of vehicle. Robbery was the only one of these offences to show an increase between the two school years.

Outside of school hours, offences were reported at or around 28 of the schools in 2007/08 and at all 29 schools in 2008/09. And, the number of offences reported decreased by 17.7% between the school years. Assault, theft, threatening, mischief, and theft from vehicle were the most frequently reported crimes in 2007/08, while robbery replaced mischief in 2008/09. Robbery was again the only offence to show an increase between the two school years.

The number of offences by geographic area and time of day in each of the school years compared are summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1
Number of Reported Offences

	2007/08 school yr	2008/09 school yr	% change
School/Grounds:			
all hours	89	70	-21.3%
school hours (M-F)	3	0	-100.0%
not school hours (M-F)	80	63	-21.3%
Within 200 Metres:			
all hours	1,231	1,050	-14.7%
school hours (M-F)	74	73	-1.4%
not school hours (M-F)	915	753	-17.7%

For the schools with SROs, compared with the previous school year, in 2008/09, there were decreases in reported offences both on school grounds and within 200 metres of the school.

Assault was the most commonly reported offence regardless of the geographic area or the time of day examined, although there were generally fewer assault offences reported in 2008/09 than in the previous school year. Reported robbery offences, on the other hand, generally increased in 2008/09.

Victimization On School Grounds Only:²⁴

Over all hours, victimizations were reported at six of the 29 schools in both 2008/09 and 2007/08; five of these schools were noted in both years. However, the number of victims reported in 2008/09 was 15.4% lower than the number of victims reported during the previous school year. In both school years, people most frequently reported being victims of assault, threatening, theft, robbery, and mischief, however, robbery was reported more frequently than theft in 2008/09. While victimization by assault, theft, and mischief decreased between the two school years, victimization by threatening increased; victimization by robbery remained the same.

During school hours, victimizations were reported at only one school in 2007/08. No victimizations were reported during school hours at any of the 29 school during the 2008/09 school year. The two victimizations reported in 2007/08 were both assaults.

Outside of school hours, victimizations were reported at six of the schools in 2007/08 and at five of the schools in 2008/09. Again, the number of victimizations reported decreased by 13.5% between the school years. Victimization by assault, threatening, theft, robbery, and mischief to vehicle were the most frequently reported in both years, with victimization by robbery reported more frequently than theft in 2008/09. And as for all hours, while victimization by assault, theft, and mischief decreased between the two school years, victimization by threatening increased; victimization by robbery remained the same.

Victimization On School Grounds or Within 200 Metres of the School:

Over all hours, victimizations were reported at or around 28 of the schools in 2007/08 and in or around all 29 schools in 2008/09. As with the number of offences, even with the expanded area of examination, the number of reported victims decreased 5.1% between the two school years. Victimization by assault, theft, threatening, robbery, and theft from vehicle were the most frequently reported in both years, with threatening reported more frequently than theft in 2008/09. Victims of threatening, robbery, and theft from vehicle went up in 2008/09 compared to the previous school year.

During school hours, victimizations were reported at or around 21 schools in both years, with 18 of the schools noted in both years. In contrast to previous measures, there was a 29.3% increase in reported victimizations between the two school years. Victimization by break & enter, assault, theft, theft of vehicle, and robbery were most frequently reported in 2007/08. While victimization in 2008/09 was most frequently reported for these same offences, the order changed somewhat to

²⁴ Victim counts reflect offences against persons, that is, the number of persons against whom a crime was committed.

break & enter, assault, robbery, theft of vehicle, and theft. Victims of both break & enter and robbery increased between the two school years.

Outside of school hours, offences were reported at or around 28 of the schools in 2007/08 and at all 29 schools in 2008/09. The number of victimizations reported decreased by 7.0% between the school years. While victimization by assault, theft, threatening, robbery, and theft from vehicle were the most frequently reported in both years, there were more victims of threatening than theft in 2008/09. The number of victims of threatening, robbery, and theft from vehicle all showed an increase between the two school years.

The number of victims by geographic area and time of day in each of the school years compared are summarized in Table 2 below.

Table 2
Number of Reported Victims

	2007/08 school yr	2008/09 school yr	% change
School/Grounds:			
all hours	39	33	-15.4%
school hours (M-F)	2	0	-100.0%
not school hours (M-F)	37	32	-13.5%
Within 200 Metres:			
all hours	1,108	1,052	-14.7%
school hours (M-F)	58	75	29.3%
not school hours (M-F)	827	769	-7.0%

For the schools with SROs, compared with the previous school year, in 2008/09, there were fewer victims on school grounds at all times examined. When the geographic area for reported victimizations was expanded to 200 meters around the school, however, there were fewer victims both over all hours and outside of school hours, but there were more victims during school hours.

People were most commonly victimized by assault regardless of the geographic area or the time of day examined, although there were generally fewer victims of assault reported in 2008/09 than in the previous school year. Victims of both threatening and robbery, however, generally increased in 2008/09.

Discussion and Recommendations

Discussion

The results of the SRO evaluation suggest that the School Resource Officers had an overall positive effect in schools, and in particular a positive effect on students that the SROs interacted with.

Schools were seen as being safer than the neighbourhoods around the schools by students, administrators/teachers, and parents. Although the mere presence of the SRO officers did not seem to affect student perceptions of safety of the school or the neighbourhood around the school, nonetheless perceptions of a safe school were high. Perceptions of safety of school did improve for those students who had talked informally to an officer or for those who had thought having an SRO assigned to the school was a good idea. Students who had approached the SRO to talk about a problem they were having felt less safe in the school and in the neighbourhood around the school than students who did not approach the SRO to talk about a problem; these results are not unexpected, especially if the type of problem the students wanted to talk about affected their safety or feelings of safety (e.g. were being harassed, intimidated, bullied, etc.).

Teachers/administrators felt safer than students in the school and in the neighbourhood around the school, and were more likely than students to say the school was, in general, not violent. When asked how often they worried about certain issues, administrators/teachers generally worried the most, (although worry was generally for students rather than for themselves or other staff members); parents' beliefs about their children's level of worry generally reflected the level of worry reported by the students. The School Resource Officers felt that that safety in and around the school had improved during the school year.

Having a School Resource Officer at the school seemed to have a positive affect on student reporting of victimization, especially if students had talked informally to the officer, had approached the officer to talk about a problem, or just thought that having the SRO assigned to the school was a good idea. The effect the presence of an SRO is on reporting when students witnessed a crime was less clear as there was no change in reporting overall, but where a student had talked informally with the officer or had approached the officer to talk about a problem, the student was more willing to report a crime they had witnessed.

When examining offences and victimization with regard to the school and the neighbourhood surrounding the school, offences and victimization generally decreased in 2008/2009 compared to the previous school year.

Thefts and robberies (of students) were among the top worries of administrators/teachers and students, and believed by parents to be the most prevalent worries of their children. Further, administrators/teachers were more worried about kids being bullied than were the students, and parents thought their children were more worried about gangs than the students reported being. Administrators/teachers thought the most serious problems were drugs and kids hanging out in hallways between classes, while students thought the most serious problems in school were drugs and being robbed - concern with robbery may reflect general increase in robbery offences seen.

Administrators/teachers saw the relationship between students and police more positively than the students did; administrators and teachers saw the relationship between themselves and the police as more positive than the relationship between the students and police. SROs saw their relationships with students, staff, and administration more positively than students and administrators/teachers saw their relationships with police. And, administrators and teachers were more likely to think having the SRO assigned to their school was a good idea than were students.

Overall, the positive attitudes of the School Resource Officers and school administrators/teachers appears to be the most important factor in creating a positive and effective experience for all partners.

The first year of the School Resource Officer program yielded positive results with the potential to be increasingly beneficial in crime prevention/reporting and relationship building, especially between police and students. Young people get to see police officers in a different light, and police officers get to see young people in a different light – when the program works well, both sides can take something positive away. While many students commented that their officer was ‘great’, ‘cool’, ‘fun’, and ‘nice’, many SROs commented that it was an ‘excellent experience’, a ‘great first year’, ‘all positive’, and a ‘fantastic idea’.

Recommendations

As is evident in the findings of this evaluation, the School Resource Officer Program has made progress in achieving its objectives and has shown potential for further benefits to be derived from the program. There is evidence to suggest that the relationship between students and police has improved, that interaction between SROs and students has had a positive effect on reporting of crime and victimization, and that students are amenable to, and even want officer participation in educational programs and extra-curricular activities.

In order that the achievements made to date are maintained and potential benefits are realized, the Service must recognize the importance of the program as a means to developing a trusting relationship with youth, and in turn, providing and maintaining a safer and healthier school environment.

1. Officers recruited and assigned to SRO positions must possess a skill level that reflects the duties and importance of the position, be committed to the goals of the program, be able to work on their own initiative with little supervision, and firmly believe in the program and its potential benefits.
2. Officers assigned to SRO positions must be trained to maximize their effect in the schools. In particular, School Resource Officers must be trained in youth engagement; training for other practical skills including positive interaction with youth, presentation techniques specific to youth, etc. is also required.
3. An SRO tool kit must be developed to take advantage of the students’ stated interest in presentations by SROs. A series of structured and consistent presentations, workshops and activities must be made available to SROs; the toolkit must not, however, limit the SRO’s ability to respond to the unique needs of their school.

4. SRO shift schedules must allow officers to participate in all school activities. The schedule must be sufficiently flexible to allow officers to be available for before- and after- school programs/activities and when students are not in class.
5. The importance of the SRO position to community safety must be made clear and supported by the Unit Commander; this position should be incorporated into the divisional training program.
6. To increase divisional support for, and recognition of the SRO program, provide information to divisional officers on the SRO program and its goals.
7. A review of the equipment and resource needs of SRO officers is necessary (i.e. vehicles, computer equipment, etc.); identified needs must be met in accordance with the importance of the position.
8. The SRO program must continue to be mutually supported by the Toronto Police Service and the School Boards; a trusting and respectful relationship is critical.
9. All school administrators and teachers must be well informed of the program and its goals. The Service must provide information to school administrators and teachers outlining the purpose of SRO program, the role of the SROs, and expectations of school staff.
10. Additional staff/resources will be necessary for the co-ordination of the SRO program if the program is to continue on a permanent basis and the above recommendations are to be implemented.