

DATE: June 8, 2021

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Darrel Robertson, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: School Safety Coach

ORIGINATOR: Kathy Muhlethaler, Assistant Superintendent of Operations and Learning Services

RESOURCE

STAFF: Jennifer Allen, Kim Backs, Sue Bell, Brad Burns, Aryn Ford, Darren Fox, John Holmes, John Hrdlicka, Wolf Kolb, Camille Loken, David Morris, Bryan Radmanovich, Christina Jones, Sheri Long, Kris Simpson, Rick Stanley, Darryl Sutherland, Tammy Tchir, Hans Van Ginhoven, Lisa Wright

REFERENCE: N/A

ISSUE

The School Resource Officer (SRO) program has been a part of Edmonton Public Schools since 1979 and was suspended in the fall of 2020 while an evaluation of the program was to be conducted. This year, Edmonton Police Services (EPS) initiated the community-based Youth Enhanced Deployment model as an alternative to the school resource officer model. Ongoing feedback from school principals this year indicates that there is a desire to explore a school-based position that has a consistent presence with high visibility in the school and relationship building with community.

BACKGROUND

In September 2020, a new program to replace the School Resource Officers in schools for the 2020-2021 school year was introduced. This new program, the Youth Enhanced Deployment model (YED), was developed last summer in a collaborative effort between staff from Edmonton Public Schools and Edmonton Police Services.

Through the new YED model, police officers would not be assigned directly to specific schools in the Division. Instead, officers trained to work with youth were assigned across two geographic areas of the city (north and south) and, subject to availability, would be identified to respond to calls in schools and the community that involved school-aged youth.

The Superintendent has met with principals throughout the year to gather their feedback on YED and their work to support safety and well-being in their schools. Despite the intent of YED to support school safety, the ongoing review of the model has demonstrated there is an opportunity and the desire to find additional ways to support a safe and positive learning environment.

In 2017, Toronto Public School Board suspended their School Resource Program. In the absence of school resource officers, they explored an alternate school-based staffing position to support school safety. Through this work, they created the position of a school safety monitor. The school safety monitor is a visible person in the school facility, known to all staff and students, who provides a safety-focused presence in the school by walking the hallways and school grounds, watching for intruders and

resolving conflicts between students. In Toronto, the role of the school safety monitor is filled by people who have a coaching or mentoring role with youth, with many school safety monitors being people who grew up in the community where the school is located.

CURRENT SITUATION

A series of meetings were held between Senior administration and school principals during the 2020-21 school year related to school safety. Feedback from these meetings demonstrated the importance of a new school-based role that supports safety and well-being in the school community. This role would include the following:

- Working closely with school administration in the provision of a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment and working with students around behaviour and conduct expectations within the school community.
- Building relationships with students of the school and youth from the surrounding community.
- Identifying potential situations of conflict and proactively working to mitigate these situations.
- Supporting students relative to wellness checks and safety plans.

Based on this work, principals worked with senior administration to co-create a position description for the role of a school safety coach within the Division. The position description was submitted to Human Resources and has been classified as an Exempt Non-Management Grade 3.

Principals now have the option, should they choose, to initiate the process to hire a school safety coach who can help meet the needs of the school community with an emphasis on trauma informed practices, restorative practices and relationship building. Central DUs will continue the work to provide support to schools.

KEY POINTS

- All schools interested in hiring a school safety coach will have this position advertised simultaneously from June 4-11 in PeopleSoft Careers and on the Division's website.
- Applicant listings will be available for school leaders Monday, June 14.
- Target effective date for these positions is mid-August to allow time for onboarding and orientation.
- The salary of school safety coaches will come out of individual school budgets choosing to include this position in their staffing plan for the 2021-22 school year.

KM:dr