SCHOOL SECURITY: WHAT WE KNOW AND WHAT WE NEED TO KNOW

Final Report to the Spencer Foundation

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Preface

In response to acts of violence around the country, schools rush to tighten their security in the hope that this will prevent or minimize the impact of such events locally. Security measures – from locked doors and metal detectors, backpack searches, and cameras, to the presence of on-duty armed police officers—have been implemented with increasing frequency and cost. The activities are undertaken against a backdrop of research that provides *few if any hard facts about the utility or effectiveness of these measures.*

To address this need, a two-day conference was convened in Washington, DC in October 2018 to compile and discuss the most pressing questions about school security measures.[1] Participants were 28 experts on school security, including leading scholars on the topic, practitioners who deal with security issues on a day-to-day basis, and advocates concerned with the impacts on students.[2]

The purposes of the conference were: (1) to convene a community of professionals concerned with issues of school security who may have been working in allied fields but separately; (2) to promote the exchange of information and thinking among members of the group; and (3) to compile a database of published and unpublished materials on security measures to inform decision makers and others. To accomplish goals (1) and (2), the conference was organized so as to maximize interactions among the participants. Brief summaries of the latest research were presented to introduce the main themes. Small-group discussions followed and were reported back to the full group for further comments.

The database (goal 3) is in the form of a public access website (http://ed.buffalo.edu/security-conference.html) with several components: an annotated bibliography produced by the organizers with summaries, reviews, and comments on

[1] The conference was sponsored by the Spencer Foundation, with additional support from the Graduate School of Education at the State University of New York at Buffalo. Meeting facilities were provided by The American University in Washington.
[2] List of participants in the Appendix

over 200 written works in the field[3] (published and unpublished) (http://ed.buffalo.edu/security-conference/bibliography.html), recent writings by the participants themselves; and PowerPoint summaries of the presentations at the conference. At this time, it is the most complete compendium of the sort available. The collection remains active.

A year's work went into creating this report, containing the main points discussed at the meeting. It is written in an accessible style to be informative to researchers and practitioners. The sections of the report summarize experts' thinking and current research on four overriding questions about school security:

- *Implementation of security measures:* Are American schools making informed decisions about measures to assure the safety of students and staff?
- *Effects of school security measures:* Can school security measures be expected to provide actual and/or perceived safety for students and staff?
- *Security guards:* What are the intended and unintended consequences of having police guards in schools?
- *Mental health as a security measure:* How can mental health professionals and services bolster school security?

They include information taken directly from the participants' research and their comments at the conference. When we do not quote the experts verbatim, we summarize themes raised by several participants and/or discussed at length. We have done our best to synthesize the points made by the participants, with as little embellishment as possible except to complete ideas and provide further reference material.

In any case, *the contents of this report derive from our experts and reflect scientific work carried out by them and their colleagues.* A final synopsis emphasizes the most salient points in terms of what is "known" and what we still need to find out through further observation and research.

[3] The primary work on this was conducted by Jessica Tamulonis.

Section **Page**

School Security

What We Know and What We Need to Know

The safety of students in our schools has always been a national priority, but attention has heightened in the wake of school shootings of recent years. Following violent and often deadly events, everyone experiences trauma and fear, especially the students, their parents, and the school staff responsible for their welfare. These events pervade the media and the public searches for the root causes asking “why did it happen?” and “what could have been done to prevent it?”

In response to acts of violence around the country, schools rush to tighten up their security in the hope that this will prevent or minimize the impact of such events locally. Procedures for responding to a person who enters the school building intending to do harm have been instituted nationwide and are practiced by all members of the school community. Further, security measures – from locked doors and metal detectors, backpack searches, and cameras, to the presence of on-duty armed police officers—have been implemented with increasing frequency and cost.

Unfortunately, these activities are undertaken against a backdrop of research that provides *few if any hard facts about the utility or effectiveness of these approaches*. Due to the relatively small number of scholars and practitioners who compile data in this area, and to limited opportunities for debate and discussion, the current research base presents “a mixed, complex, and sometimes contradictory picture” (Hankin, Hertz and Simon, 2011, p. 104). Such obvious questions as “which procedures or security measures are most likely to deter violence or crime within a school, not to mention harm from an outside intruder?” are not answered clearly. Decisions to implement security measures rely more on publicity given to high profile events, parent demands, and predispositions of school leaders and their stakeholders than they do on solid data.

The sections that follow focus on four main themes emphasized by experts in school security: (1) The implementation of school security measures; (2) The effects of school security measures on all stakeholders; (3) The particular effects of school

security guards; and (4) The role played by mental health professionals in the school security equation.

A final section offers a synopsis to alert readers to completed research and research still needed on these pressing topics. These are intended to help decision makers assess their own policies and practices based on scientific research. It may disturb some readers that we pose recommendations to some but not all the most pressing questions. This is because the panel of experts did not identify sufficient research on the question from which data-based recommendations could be made.

Implementation

School security implementation refers to the actions taken by the federal government, states, school districts and administrators to promote safety among members of the school community. This section summarizes research on school security, existing school security plans, and input from the experts at the conference on school security. These questions were addressed:

- What financial and non-financial criteria do decision makers use in choosing security measures to install?
- Second, what types of schools are implementing particular types of security?
- Third, do decisions to implement security measures at a school really spike following after high-profile harmful events?
- Fourth, does the implementation of school security measures comes at the cost of other needed student services?

What are the criteria for implementation decisions?

Research cited by the experts at the school security conference shows that the frequency and severity of security measures can vary from building to building within the same district, depending on the approach of the principal in the building (Mukuria, 2002; Fabelo et al., 2011). Variation is also due to the fact that school administrators serve limited terms and need to respond to the demands of parents in the community. Experts

confirmed the limited choices offered to school security decision makers, underscoring that federal grant money is often issued with an agenda for “target hardening,” or keeping schools safe from outside threats, rather than school community development or additional mental health staff such as counselors or social workers.

The reasons for choices made by school districts, administrators and state education departments are not always obvious. The conference participants asked whether the criteria for safety measures are formulated clearly, consistent from one school to another, and based on sound research. These are difficult standards to meet for a country with over 132,000 schools. The measures implemented in American public schools in recent years are shown in Table 1, as estimated from the government’s School Survey on Crime and Safety.[4]

Most schools have between seven and ten security measures. Measures used to restrict access to the school building (i.e., visitor sign in, locking school doors) are quite common. Security cameras to monitor activity at the school, including disruptive and violent behavior on the part of students are almost as common (81 percent of schools). Despite being the subject of a relatively large number of published reports, the use of metal detectors (either daily or randomly) at American schools is quite rare.

Certain school security measures are more salient--perhaps even intrusive--relative to others. For example, a student’s experience in a school where they are subject to dog sniffs, sweeps for contraband, and drug testing can be quite different from that in a school where security is less invasive. And for some students, being met at the entrance by an armed police officer can be traumatic. Thus, schools differ not only on how many security measures they use but different types of measures, A school with a high number of security measures may be actually have a “prison-like” feeling.

[4] A complete census of the security measures used in the entire population of American schools has not been conducted.

Table 1.

Use of 22 security measures in American public schools.

Security Measure	% of Schools
Control access to school buildings during school hours	94.1
Visitor sign in and wear badges	93.5
Use one or more security cameras to monitor the school	80.6
Provide two-way radios to any staff	73.3
Provide an automatic electronic emergency notification system	73.0
Require faculty and staff to wear badges or picture IDs	67.9
Equip classrooms with locks so that doors can be locked from inside	66.7
Enforce a strict dress code	53.1
Provide school lockers to students	50.4
Control access to school grounds during school hours	49.9
School Resource Officer (SRO) or other sworn Police officer	47.7
Provide a structured anonymous threat reporting system	43.9
Have “panic button(s)” or silent alarms connected to law enforcement	27.1
Use one or more random dog sniffs to check for drugs	24.6
Require students to wear uniforms	21.5
Security guards	19.8
Perform one or more random sweeps for contraband	11.9
Require drug testing	7.2
Require students to wear badges or picture IDs	7.0
Perform one or more random metal detector checks on students	4.5
Require clear book bags or ban book bags on school grounds	3.9
Require metal detector checks on students every day	1.8

Total number of security measures	
0	0.0
1-2	1.0
3-4	2.6
5-6	13.0
7-8	30.9
9-10	30.9
11-12	13.6
13-+	8.1
Median	9.0

SOURCE: Original results from the 2015-2016 wave of the School Survey on Crime and Safety conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics.

In addition to these measures, thirty-three states require school safety and emergency plans that detail how schools will prevent and address violence or emergency situations (Center for State Governments Justice Center, 2014). School districts within a state may implement additional security measures depending on district needs (2014). The security plans do provide some insight into the criteria for implementation decisions. The state of Florida's emergency preparedness requirements provides an interesting case study. The policy, implemented in 2003, requires schools to plan for access control, including: the number of school entrances, sign-in, and background checks; emergency equipment including protective gear for security officers and communication systems; training for administrators, teachers and staff; communications and notifications within the district and to parents and students; and coordination with local law enforcement (O'Connor, 2012). These guidelines are open to interpretation as far as how security is enacted, and are perhaps being made with greater political motivations than with strong foundations in research.

Adding another layer of complexity to decision making is the source of funding for implementation, and the limitations on how those funds can be spent. In March of 2018, Florida Governor Rick Scott signed the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety act, which provided $162 million in funding for school security personnel and $99 million for school-specific needs, but defines those needs as potentially including metal detectors, bulletproof glass, steel doors, and upgraded locks (Winn, 2018). As a result, security decision criteria may just be outlined by the limited range of options indicated by those providing the funding. The research on how schools implement school security is limited (DeAngelis, Brent, & Ianni, 2011) and information on decision criteria, even more so.

Data collection through the School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS) documents the decisions have that have been made, but not the decision-making process itself. Further study is needed to provide transparency on the criteria by which implementation decisions are enacted. What makes a school secure is an arbitrary definition in and of itself; the definition of security itself is subject to interpretation, depending on which stakeholder is asked. A universal definition (and indeed possibly

sub-definitions) needs to be established for school security, and data needs to be collected in support of the effectiveness of school security measures in order to create a set of meaningful criteria that can be tailored to each state and district. In addition, national indicators of school safety should be established, data should be collected, and this data should then be compared to how dollars are actually spent in school district budgets; both cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness studies are needed.

Good research on the effectiveness of measures is severely lacking, and that which does exist may be difficult for practitioners to access. Once conducted, this research should be published to outlets that reach school administrators and other decision makers, rather than just in academic journals.

What types of security are implemented at what types of schools?

Experts at the conference brought to light the inequalities in implementation between schools. Servoss and Finn, both in attendance at the conference, guided a discussion of racial and geographic differences in implementation. Experts also proposed that suburban schools often choose less visible security measures such as dress codes so that schools do not appear to be unsafe. Suburban schools might prefer to project an image that there were no safety issues with which to be concerned, whereas urban schools might prefer the image of taking school security seriously because of security threats from the outside community. We therefore aimed to identify the nature of the inequalities in implementation.

Servoss and Finn's (2014) study of school security policy examined characteristics of schools related to security; the results of this study largely inform the background of this section. First, they found that schools in the Midwest and South were more likely to have any type of security than schools in the West or Northeast, and urban and suburban schools were likely to have more security measures than rural schools. Interestingly, this may be correlated with the types of involvement engaged in by typically higher SES suburban parents versus typically lower SES urban parents. Suburban parents tend toward a more "hands-on" approach, interacting directly with the schools, whereas urban parents favor a "hands-off" approach, supporting their students

indirectly at home, rather than through direct school involvement (Auerbach, 2007). That higher SES parents are themselves setting foot on campus may be correlated with lower spending on measures such as metal detectors or security cameras, as this would make the parents feel uncomfortable, rather than lower SES parents who often defer to the schools for decision-making.

Controlling for location, the study also uncovered that large schools implemented more security than did small schools. The strongest correlate of security implementation, however, was racial composition. Schools with higher proportions of black students overall had greater numbers of security measures. In all schools, the most common forms of security were dog sniffs, use of paid police during school hours, enforcement of dress code, and security cameras. However, schools differed on their use of security measures based on their percentage of minority enrollment. Low minority and High-Hispanic schools reported that no (0.0%) of students were required to pass through metal detectors each day, compared to 10.3% of students in High-Black schools. Districts with high percentages of minority and low-income students reported higher overall spending on security measures, with a 10 percentage point increase in the proportion of low-income and minority students in a district associated with an increase in security spending as a percentage of operating expenditure of .02 and .03 percentage points, respectively (Nance, 2013a; DeAngelis, 2011).

Servoss's new findings (2018) from the 2015-2016 School Survey on Climate and Safety (SSOCS) are consistent with previous research on racial disparities. Having developed an index of the total degree of security at each school, Servoss (2018) compared schools with no black students to those with the highest number of black students. Schools with the highest number of black students were five times as likely to have security personnel, seven times as likely to require visitor check-in, nearly seven times as likely to have a random metal detector and require student IDs, and almost three times as likely to have locked grounds. This new analysis underscores previous work, indicating that racial disparities in security implementation persist; importantly, these disparities cannot be explained away by differences in region, urbanicity, school size, or, most importantly, by the degree of misconduct and crime in the school. There is

more security at schools with more Black students not because there is worse student crime and misconduct or because the school is in the city, for example, but because there are more Black students there

Urban schools tended to have higher percentages of minority students, and conference participants noted that in urban schools, these practices are so common that black students may have already become habituated to the presence of police, metal detectors and cameras in schools. Conversely, a policy brief by the Children's Defense Fund (2018) cited data that lower income students experienced fewer active shooter trainings than did their more affluent peers; 59 percent of children in households with incomes below $25,000 say they learn how to respond to a school shooter, compared with 77 percent of children in households with incomes of $100,000 or more (Children's Defense Fund, 2018). The same parental involvement that dampens visible security measures may be the impetus for increased emergency preparedness.

Jason Nance has suggested the inclusion of implicit bias training for security decision makers, from district policy makers to day-to-day decision makers such as school security personnel. Such training aims to make people aware of prejudices they hold of which they may have been previously unaware (Nance, in press). This recommendation should, however, be enacted with caution, as even leading proponents such as Dr. Mahzarin Banaji indicate that such training should be voluntary, as mandatory trainings tend to lead to backlash (Jussim, 2017). The most important result of this training, according to Nance, should be teaching people to slow down before they make decisions, which is important given the findings from the next section on security implementation in the wake of high profile events.

Does fear from high profile events spike security implementation?

Experts at the conference emphasized that, though tragic, school shootings are far less common than the public is led to believe by the media and 24-hour news cycle, and that recency bias, the tendency to remember most vividly something that happened in the near past, likely plays a role in the spikes in security implementation after high profile events. We sought to examine whether these events truly do spike

implementation despite their anomalous nature, and to try to tease out whether recency bias may be predisposing decision makers to particular implementation choices.

School security has increased on the whole since the early 1990s. In 1994, 13% of schools employed uniformed school security officers, versus 51% in 2014 (Addington, 2009). But, have high profile events such as the shootings at Columbine, Newtown and Parkland spiked security implementation? The answer, it seems, is yes. After high profile events, public response has called for increased security measures, with security guards and security cameras ranking among the most commonly implemented strategies (Jonson, 2017; Addington, 2009). Tragedies, they asserted, propel the intensity of security implementation.

Empirical studies seem to confirm the effect of recency bias. Of the 30% of school administrators who reported using security cameras on the 2005 School Crime Supplement to the National Crime Victimization Survey, 24% had added them between 1999 and 2005, a period encompassing the Columbine shooting (Addington, 2009). Though not as common, metal detector use also increased, with 8% of the overall 14% of schools using metal detectors adding them between 1999 and 2005 (Addington, 2009). After the shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School, these numbers rose even further, with 75% of a national survey of public schools reporting the use of security cameras and 40% reporting having school security personnel on campus at least once per week (Porter, 2015). The experts affirmed that law enforcement is now more prevalent in schools than ever, confirming the potential directions of schools in light of recent security measure funding. In late 2018, the US Department of Justice passed the STOP School Violence Act, which awarded over $70 million in grant funding for school security measures after the Parkland shooting; it is probable that these funds will once again increase security implementation (Campisi, 2018).

High profile events do spike implementation, and it is possible that this is enacted based on fear, rather than knowledge of effective measures. To prevent this knee-jerk deployment of funds and personnel, a waiting period is recommended during which data are gathered and students and staff are provided with mental health resources to help deal with the fear and trauma often incited by such events. After this cooling off period,

more informed implementation decisions can be made. In times of tragedy, decision makers may turn to visible security strategies, whether or not these are the most effective course of action. Instead, informed decisions should be made.

Does security implementation come at the cost of other needed services?

Conference participants posed an important question: when the funding on grants for school security runs out, how are recurring costs covered? They emphasized that administrators would be hesitant to remove visible security measures such as security personnel and metal detectors at the risk of seeming unconcerned for student safety, which strains school budgets. However, they also affirmed that they were stymied by the issue of a lack of clear reporting on security spending in schools, and urged a reform in data collection. This provided a framework for investigating first what research was available, and second, if it was possible to identify relationships between spending on security measures and on other services.

Like many of the questions surrounding school security, this question is difficult to answer given the current data limitations. Research hints at school security spending cutting into funding for other services; in a study of operating expenditures of Texas schools, schools spent 0.31% of their budgets on school security and monitoring, versus 0.11% on social work services (Brent & DeAngelis, 2013). This differs based on school urbanicity, with urban schools spending significantly more on security services than rural schools. Interestingly, however, poorer districts were found to spend a larger overall percentage of their operating budgets on school security than were wealthier districts, which may point to a decrease in other services given these strains on already stretched district budgets (DeAngelis, 2011).

Whether these Texas results are generalizable, however, is unclear, as most other states do not require a specific budget-line item for school security in their financial reporting (Molnar, 2013). Federal grants also typically outline measures for target hardening, a clear demarcation of funding use toward security implementation and away from other services. However, more research is needed beyond correlational measures of spending. Economic data may not fully answer the question of whether

school security is paid for at the cost of other student services. As Servoss (2013) noted, positive or negative correlations between security spending and mental health spending show an association but do not confirm that one service comes by sacrificing the other. Future research should survey planners about the degree to which security expenditures are budgeted at the expense of other services.

The Effects of School Security Measures

It is difficult to assess whether security measures achieve their main purpose -- increased safety for persons and property – because harmful events are rare. But *perceived* safety is also of concern due to the importance of students *feeling* they are safe and treated fairly. Conference participants presented recent work on actual and perceived safety although the discussion mostly exposed the paucity of scientific information about effects of school security measures.

This section addresses the following questions:

- Do security measures really keep schools safe?
- How do security measures affect the perceptions of safety held by students, teachers and principals, and parents?
- What role do perceptions of safety play in shaping a school's climate?
- Is school safety related to academic outcomes?

Are schools safe?

The conferees did not focus entirely on school shootings or other "high-profile" events (e.g., arson, fights with weapons, rape), due to the difficulty of documenting rare and unpredictable events and the resulting dearth of scientific data. There was consensus on four points, however: first,

> Contrary to popular belief, violence in schools has declined dramatically in the past two decades. After years of studying school violence, Dewey concludes, "'Children and youth are safer in schools than almost anywhere else, but you hear about 'school violence' rather than 'restaurant violence' or 'mall violence'" (Bellows, 2018).

Second, high-profile events such as school shootings are traumatic or life-altering for everyone involved. Third, they require immediate services of first responders, mental health professionals and others. Fourth, teaching students and staff how to respond when confronted by violence is justified under most conditions. The opinion was also expressed that running students through safety and preparedness drills in response to simulated threats may in itself be traumatic, although no data to support this point were cited.

In 2018 the Center for Homeland Defense and Security posted its K-12 School Database, listing over 1300 school shooting incidents between 1970 and 2016 Riedman, O'Neill, Jarnegan, & Metzger, 2018). Shootings in which students and staff were injured or killed were followed by intense media coverage, a generalized expression of alarm, and a rush to increase safety measures in our schools (Addington, 2009; Borum et al., 2010; Kupchik & Bracy, 2009). These covered a gamut of approaches from individual security measures (e.g. backpack checks, metal detectors, dog sniffs) to threat assessment programs (Borum, Cornell, Modzeleski, & Jimerson, 2010; Cornell et al., 2018), to training for students and staff about how to react in the face of threat or violence.

Threat assessment programs include evaluations of students' potential for violence (risk and protective factors) and their resilience in the face of intra- and interpersonal problems and conflicts. These are directed at specific students and/or also implemented on broad scale. Training is in the form of drills for students and staff in order to avoid a threatening situation (e.g., lockdown and lockout drills; other active shooter drills) to defensive principles (e.g., leave the scene; barricade entranceways; actively resist a violent person). Private and government publications describe the scope of these approaches in detail (e.g., Borum et al., 2010; Jonson, 2017; U.S. Department of Education, 2014; 2018; Petrosino, Guckenburg, & Fronius, 2012).

Unfortunately, the effectiveness of these programs in preventing shootings and other major acts of violence is very difficult to assess. Some data have been collected but have not been studied in depth. For example, the National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO) documented the roles of SROs during six incidents on

which data could be obtained. SROs played a role in five incidents but were judged only to be marginally successful in preventing harm (Canady, 2018). On a broader scale, Langman and Straub (2019) classified 102 incidents with weapons as close calls, thwarted, or completed attacks (Langman & Straub, 2019). Their database includes a number of characteristics of the perpetrators, their families, and schools, but lacks the information needed to connect the causes with the acts of violence.

Studies of individual security measures for preventing school shootings or other high-profile acts of violence conclude “mixed effects” or no definitive findings for each one. A recent summary of research (Jonson, 2017) points to these conclusions: for armed police officers: “Few studies have examined the role of SROs in reducing crime in the school, with no study assessing the preventative capabilities of an SRO with mass school shootings” (p. 962); for school access control: “[F]ew security measures had any preventative effect, and … no significant effect on either violent or serious violent crimes” (p. 964); for metal detectors: “[M]etal detectors appear to have some deterrent effect … [but their presence] has contributed to the criminalization of the school system [and] …metal detectors do not completely eliminate students from bringing weapons into a school” (p. 965).

The participants also conceptualized safety more broadly (i.e., beyond high profile events) in terms of misbehavior and crime in the day-to-day functioning of schools, for example, physical aggression, vandalism, bullying, and weapons in school. They pointed to their own studies and others that address these problems, but noted that the sequence of events is not always clear. Even when connections between security and crime are found, the question remains: “Are security measures implemented in schools after high misbehavior and crime are found (cross-sectional view)?” or, “Have misbehavior and crime been affected following the introduction of security measures (longitudinal view)?”

Studies that controlled for day-to-day misbehavior and crime again yielded piece-meal or contradictory conclusions (Servoss & Finn, 2014). For example, in a meta-analysis of the effects of metal detectors, seven studies showed very limited impact on student behavior (Hankin, Hertz, & Simon, 2011). One study found a slight decrease in

the likelihood of students carrying a weapon in school but no decrease in fighting. The other six found no relationship of metal detectors with any form of misbehavior. In terms of locker searchers, there was more student victimization in schools that practiced these than in schools that did not (Schreck, Miller, & Gibson, 2003), and schools that required student uniforms had higher instances of drug-related crimes compared to schools that did not require uniforms (Cheurprakobkit & Bartsch, 2005). Research on individual security measures across the board fails to provide consistent generalizations. However, the research does not show that particular school security measures protect students, staff or facilities from mild or severe student misbehavior. In fact, the mere notion of studying an individual inanimate security measure as it relates to any outcome lacks ecological validity as these measures exist as part of the entire school security environment rather than in isolation.

Several studies considered schools' entire "security environment." These studies found that the security environment was related to the level of disruption in the school. Nickerson and Martens (2008) found that security/enforcement practices (use of cameras, law enforcement personnel, and also detentions and suspensions) were linked positively but weakly to school disruption and school crime. In an analysis of data from the National Crime and Victimization Survey, Mayer and Leone (1999) found that a "secure building" (security guards, hallway supervision, metal detectors, locker searches) had a moderate positive relationship with school indiscipline, that is, more disorder occurred in schools with higher security levels.

Again, the direction of effects remains unclear because all studies used cross-sectional data. Questions of cause-and-effect are unanswered, such as: "Were security measures ineffective but simply placed in schools with high levels of crime and misbehavior?" Or "Did high security reduce misbehavior and crime to its current (albeit high) level?" Or "Did security actually promote school violence and misbehavior through invasions of privacy, betraying student trust, and through creating an atmosphere intensely focused on punitiveness?" (suggested by Hyman and Perone, 1998; Noguera, 1995). New research designs for longitudinal data are needed to allow researchers to connect the implementation of security measures to *changes* in misbehavior and crime.

Despite the absence of scientific data about measures to protect students, school personnel or school property from serious harm, the U.S. Department of Education issued a lengthy set of recommendations for state and local school leaders entitled *Final Report of the Federal Commission on School Safety* (2018). The members of the Commission are not named, nor are the conclusions presented as having a foundation in scientific research, leaving readers to wonder about the underlying rationale for the report.

Do students *feel* safe?

Conference participants felt strongly that it is important for students to feel physically and psychologically safe in school. A student who feels unsafe may have difficulty attending to teachers, concentrating on assignments, maintaining positive attitudes, or building good teacher-pupil relationships (Akiba, 2010; Bracy, 2011).

Oddly enough, high levels of school security seem to decrease perceptions of school safety – the opposite of the effect intended. Ferraro's (1995) theory of incivilities offers a partial explanation. The theory posits that individuals take cues from the environment ("incivilities") when determining their likelihood of being a victim of a crime. In this context visible security measures such as metal detectors or police guards may alert students that danger might be present, increasing the chance that a violent event could occur. Empirical studies support this hypothesis. (e.g., Bachman, Randolph, & Brown, 2011; Brooks, Schiraldi, & Zeidenberg, 2000; Reingle Gonzalez, Jetelina, & Jennings, 2016; Servoss, 2014; Shreck & Miller, 2003). For example, Servoss (2013) found that even with statistical controls for school and student demographics and the student's personal history of victimization, "[T]he school security environment had a unique negative effect on perceptions of safety" (p. 20).

It was noted that fear of harm increases precipitously following violent events such as the Columbine shooting or Sandy Hook, though it was also noted that these reactions diminish over time and are felt less in distant locations. When fear is high, calls for additional security measures (including police officers) also increase. But do these measures alleviate students' concerns? Anecdotes were offered about students'

befriending SROs and guards and feeling reassured when they are around. But these situations seem to be unique and not well understood in the larger perspective of pros and cons of school guards.

Several factors may exacerbate students' fears. For one, feelings of safety are undermined by classroom disorder, crime in the form of bullying, fights, vandalism, theft, drug use and physical aggression toward teachers, and weapons in school (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). If security measures are visible and accompanied by an inflexible disciplinary code, zero-tolerance rules, and strict enforcement, this situation may actually be conducive to fear and school avoidance. Some students can feel defensive in a high security environment. For example, if a student has been arrested (or even suspended multiple times), encountering an armed police officer at the entrance to school can be highly intimidating. It is important for research to identify students' reactions to a high security environment in general, and those who may feel threatened in particular.

Exceptions to the general finding—negative effects of security on feelings of being safe—have been reported for some groups of students. For example, in a sample of California high school students in 8 districts, black students reported the poorest overall perceptions of police in their schools and the lowest feelings of safety compared to white, Latino, and Asian students (Nakamoto, Cerna, & Stern, 2019). Other research found exceptions to the general conclusion, but these are few and far between and pertain to specific groups identified by gender, race, urbanicity, school grades, and neighborhood safety (e.g., (e.g., Bachman, Randolph, & Brown, 2011; Perumean-Chaney & Sutton, 2013).

It is hard to evaluate specific findings such as these in a broader perspective, but they do not negate the overall conclusion: in general, security measures have not shown the desired effect of making students feel safer. Indeed, from in-depth interviews with high school students, From interviews with high school students, Bracy (2011) concluded that "[S]tudents believe…many of the security strategies their schools use are [simply] unnecessary" (p. 365).

Safety as an essential component of school climate

When students feel at risk of physical or psychological harm, everything they do in school can be affected. If security measures fail to alleviate these fears—and perhaps even heighten them—then school security may contribute to feelings of unfair treatment, being unwelcome, and not being supported in personal or academic matters. These four ingredients of the school climate -- safety, fair treatment, making students feel welcome in their classes, and personal and academic support – have been identified as significant mediators of learning and student behavior (Bracy, 2011; Bradshaw et al., 2014; Johnson et al., 2018).

In terms of (un)fair treatment, students may perceive that disciplinary practices are unclear, disproportionate to rule infractions, or administered unevenly (Skiba, Peterson, & Williams, 1997; Thompson, 2002; Voelkl & Willert, 2006). These perceptions are often accompanied by reduced feelings of school belonging, increased feelings of alienation, school disorder, and an increased likelihood of dropping out (Akiba, 2010; Hyman & Perone, 1998; Voelkl, 2012). Kupchik and Ellis (2007) used national data to examine the relationship of four security measures to fairness of discipline. Ratings of fairness were not related to security measures in general, although locker searches for drugs and non-police school guards were accompanied by higher perceptions of equity (Kupchik & Ellis, 2007). A more recent study of police officers and cameras found only that cameras outside the school were associated with lower ratings of equity (Johnson et al., 2018). In sum, students' feelings of equitable treatment seem to be related to specific security measures in specific circumstances rather than to generalized feelings about the school climate or security level.

In terms of personal support, students need to be in an accepting and caring class environment to develop and maintain close relationships with teachers and a feeling of belonging in school (Pianta, 1999; Ryan & Patrick, 2001; Voelkl, 2012). School belonging in turn contributes to improved social skills, motivation, and academic achievement (Anderman, 2002). Academic support that goes above and beyond "just teaching," for example, help with homework, tutors, instructional coaches or mentors, remedial classes, and/or instruction in study skills helps to affirm school belonging

(Bridgeland, Dilulio, & Moarison, 2006; Dynarski & Wood, 1997; Kemple, Herlihy, & Smith, 2005). Absent these, the incentive to engage in learning activities or even to attend school in the first place can be reduced (Finn & Zimmer, 2012).

But security measures also contribute to negative perceptions of the climate and to the feeling that school is highly punitive. At the extreme, when the climate appears "hardened" (many rules, many security measures), school may feel prison-like, fostering resentment and misbehavior (Easterbrook, 1999; Cuellar, 2018),. Research is particularly scanty on students' perceptions of school security. Practical questions are not addressed, such as: "What types of school environments increase students' resentment and misbehavior?"; "How do certain elements of the school environment (e.g., safety) impact others (e.g., feeling welcome or school belonging)?"; "How can security measures be used to *reduce* students' concerns about being unsafe and to increase feelings of being welcome and supported?" It is ironic that, despite this gap in our knowledge, the U.S. Department of Education issued a set of recommendations for policy makers entitled *Guiding Principles: A Resource Guide for Improving School Climate and Discipline* (2014)

Research on school security and students' perceptions of the climate leaves us with the suggestion that security measures are negatively related to students' perceptions of the school climate, but the picture is incomplete. Studies do not provide generalizations about the overall security of schools or useful information about students' reactions to hardened environments. Nor do they distinguish adequately among particular groups of students, for example, minorities, students with histories of disciplinary actions, or students with learning problems.

Does security promote academic achievement?

The participants agreed that security can affect academic achievement if safe conditions predispose students to come to school and classes, to be open to a variety of learning experiences, and to become involved in learning activities. These direct outcomes, referred to as school engagement, can promote academic performance in turn. The model "More security = Better outcomes" was presented at the conference by

Matthew Cuellar (2018). The opposite scenario was also considered, that is, security measures may present barriers to teaching and distractions from learning (the "More security = Poorer outcomes" model). Since students have a large number of concerns (academics, interpersonal relationships, athletic activities and others) attending to safety may present itself as an additional burden. Attention and energy otherwise spent on academics may be diverted. A simple process model of these connections has also been forwarded by Lacoe (2016). The model assumes rather simply that students who do not feel safe are inclined to miss days of school and the material being taught. Absenteeism can, in turn, lead to disciplinary actions that countervene feelings of being accepted and supported. An in-depth elaboration of how these processes lead to impaired school performance was advanced by Finn (1989).

With the exception of these models, participants did not identify any paradigms to explain the connection between security measures and academic performance. Nevertheless, the relationship of security measures to student engagement was seen as central and the impact on achievement as indirect. It was also pointed out that the connections "security→engagement→ achievement" depict learning of individual students, but security measures may also have an ecological effect on achievement-related behavior in the school (e.g., attendance, discipline, or dropout rates) (Brady et al., 2007; Lacoe, 2016; Peguero & Bracy, 2015; Servoss, 2017).

Following this line of thinking, most recent studies of school security and academic performance have been based on secondary analyses of data files compiled by the U.S. Department of Education. Tanner-Smith and Fisher (2016) distinguished among eight categories of school security measures from "none" to "high security"[5]. At the student level, grades were highest and truancy lowest for students in schools with no security measures. The poorest grades and highest absenteeism were obtained by students in schools with multiple security measures, especially when security personnel were present. Differences among security arrangements on postsecondary aspirations were inconsistent. At the school level, it was found that schools using three types of security measures fared worse in terms of academic performance, and had lower

[5] Our term for the most inclusive profile comprised of security personnel, cameras, and metal detectors.

attendance rates, than all other patterns of security utilization. Decrements in attendance and postsecondary aspirations were larger in schools with high percentages of low-SES students.

Servoss and Finn (2014) examined the school's dropout rate and the percentage of the previous year's graduating class attending a 2- or 4-year college. When the data were adjusted for school and neighborhood control variables, no significant relationship was found between either academic measure (attendance, postsecondary aspirations) and any composite of 10 security measures.

In sum, at both the student and school level, there was no evidence that visible security measures had consistent beneficial effects on adolescents' academic performance. At the student level, there appears to be an answer to the better outcome/poorer outcome question: Academic performance is poorer in high-security schools, although the nature of cross-sectional data leaves the direction of causation as a mystery.

The basic question remains unanswered: "Is there any reason to believe that school security would be related to academic achievement at either level?" If this question is to be pursued, then a second must be addressed: "What are the dynamics by which security measures—individually or collectively—affect academic achievement?" Answers to these require new conceptual frameworks and process studies.

Do parents, school staff, and mental health professionals think security measures are useful?

The views of various stakeholders raised questions about which there is little research. The most prominent question raised was: "What do parents, school administrators and school staff expect security measures to accomplish?" Without clear answers to this, it would be difficult or impossible to assess their effectiveness. Second, "Do principals and school staff view that security measures are generally useful and, if so, in what ways?" The possibility was raised that security measures are seen by some as interfering with instruction and/or intruding on students' privacy and civil rights. The

views of school mental health professionals were discussed at some length, with an overriding theme of an inadequate number of school psychologists and social workers available in school settings.

At this time, there is little research on the public's views of school security. Much of the information about views of security is in the form of anecdotes and news releases. It is clear that parents and community members call for more security measures after every school shooting. The stated purpose is usually to "keep schools safe," in the hope that security measures (especially police) can accomplish this. It was not clear, however, whether parents and school personnel are aware of data to support their demands or see unintended consequences as well. The conferees attempted to identify research that explored these perceptions.

A survey of parents in Alaska about the efficacy of a statewide SRO program showed that parents have reasonable confidence in police officers to protect their children, but their confidence was "tied to their faith in the ability of police to control crime" (Myrstol, 2011, p. 35). Greater confidence was expressed by higher-SES individuals and others less apt to encounter police and the legal system. Anecdotes voiced by educators and the general public reflected that school guards were viewed positively and as useful protective agents. No data were available to show how often, when, and under what conditions these expectations are correct.

School principals like having SROs in their schools; this conclusion has been supported time and time again. In one statewide survey in Virginia, 99% of the staff responding agreed or strongly agreed with "I support having an SRO assigned to my school" (Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services, 2001, p. 3); other surveys yielded similar perceptions. The primary reason given is fear of school violence and the perception that SROs can effectively address school violence by reducing fights, drugs, stealing, and other dysfunctional behavior at their schools (May, Fessel, & Means, 2004; Travis & Coon, 2005).

In contrast to these beliefs, there are few if any reports of real reductions in school violence. The Travis--Coon (2005) nationwide survey of 1,400 schools found that

school violence was the least commonly listed reason for implementing an SRO program. It is reasonable to ask whether increased safety is real or whether the presence of police officers reassure principals and creates a feeling of safety not connected to actual events (May, Fessel, & Means, 2004). Concern has also been raised by administrators about SROs performing functions for which they are not prepared, that is, other than law enforcement (Teske, Huff & Graves, 2013). If so, this may detract from positive views of police in school.[6]

Among staff members providing psychological services, school social workers see the need for more professionals to support the mental health needs of students and others..At this time, the numbers of social workers and school psychologists are severely limited. Social workers are uniquely trained to identify elements of the school environment that impede student success, advocating for the disadvantaged, and promoting student achievement through the delivery of mental health services to individuals and groups.[7] Their approach is more "educational/therapeutic" as compared to an "authoritarian" approach that involves the deployment of police, arrests and the implementation of security hardware (Nickerson & Spears, 2007).

Social workers note the limitations of the authoritarian approach, specifically, the negative impact on students' perceptions of safety, and the austere climate it projects. The educational/therapeutic approach, in contrast, involves regular interactions with students' homes and families, communities, and with school staff (security guards in particular). It is argued that the proactive nature of this approach holds greater promise for preventing violence against and students, teachers, and administrators (Cuellar, Elswick, & Theriot, 2017a, 2017b). Social workers do see the need for some authoritarian measures including SROs, but also see the limits. In general, high marks are given to schools with strong collaborations among social workers, administrators, and SROs.

[6] This issue is discussed further in the section on Police in Schools
[7] Paraphrased from Cuellar, Elswick, and Theriot (2017b, p. 1).

Police in Schools?

Discussion at the conference regarding SROs was initially framed to ask: “should police be in schools?” However, as conversation progressed, it became clear that police in schools are here to stay. Given this reality, different questions need to be asked, including: What are the expectations of SROs in schools, and what are the realities? How do these individuals make the transition from being police officers in the community to working in schools, and how often is this transition successful? What is the ideal temperament for someone in this role? And finally, since SROs are able to make student arrests, what impact do arrests have on the diverse populations in schools? More specific questions were raised about perceptions of school guards and SROs in schools, among them, “Do teachers and other staff members understand the role(s) of SROs?” and “What is the nature of the relationships of SROs with students and school staff?” Participants also asked about effects of SROs, for example, “Does the presence of SROs reassure principals and teachers that they are safe?” “Do SROs reduce the burden teachers feel for certain disciplinary responsibilities?” and “Are SROs perceived as performing tasks beyond law enforcement or beyond their expertise?”

Research on the topic reflects two types of bias. One body of literature on SROs comes from a law enforcement practitioner perspective and calls attention to the role of SROs in mentoring, law education and counseling. A separate line of inquiry from civil rights advocates focuses on the racial disparities in school policing and the effects of arrests and criminal charges against students. This section attempts to balance these two perspectives.

What are the expectations and realities of SROs?

School resource officers differ from other school security personnel in that they are certified, sworn police officers who are employed by the local police but who are permanently assigned to work in local school districts or buildings (Myrstol, 2011). It is important to note that not all school security personnel are SROs. The School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS) differentiates between school resource officers (usually

full-time), sworn law enforcement who are not school resource officers, and security guards who are not sworn law enforcement (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). According to Pennsylvania's Act 67 legislation, a security guard is "an individual employed by a school entity, nonpublic school or a third-party vendor or an independent contractor who is assigned to a school for routine safety and security duties and has not been granted school police officer powers and duties." Conversely, an SRO is "a law enforcement officer commissioned and employed by a law enforcement agency whose duty station is located in a school entity or nonpublic school and whose stationing is established by an agreement between the law enforcement agency and the school entity or nonpublic school" (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2019). In a 2018 survey of 399 SROs, 84% were male and 16% were female (Education Week Research Center, 2018). According to the Education Week Research Center who conducted the survey,

> The average officer is a 48-year-old white male who has worked in law enforcement for 19 years and has been a school police officer for 9 years. He works for a local police or sheriff's department and has experience working with youth prior to becoming an SRO. He is assigned to a single school as opposed to multiple campuses. He views his primary role as enforcing laws. (2018).

Perceived as a recent development, the posting of SROs actually dates to 1953 in schools in Flint, Michigan (Lopez, 2019) but in recent years, the number of SROs has increased. The National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO) reports an estimated 14,000 to 20,000 SROs currently in the US (NASRO, 2019). But as this wide range of estimates demonstrates, information is limited; even NASRO, the central SRO training organization, is unsure of the exact number of SROs in schools. NASRO knows a little more about where the SROs are, citing a 2018 National Center for Education Statistics report that 42 percent of public schools employ one or more SROs.

Coon and Travis (2012) note that there is also a lack of consensus among schools, districts, and police organizations as to what the common roles of the SRO are, not to mention the diversity by state and police jurisdiction (Girouard, 2001). An SRO may serve an entire district in a rural area, but only one school in a more populated

urban area (Lopez, 2019). Often (but not always), memorandums of understanding (MOUs) are drafted between a school and a law enforcement agency. A memorandum of understanding, according to NASRO, is a written agreement between a police organization and a school that defines the selection criteria for SROs and outlines what SROs will (and will not) be responsible for in schools (Rosiak, 2014). These documents are designed to "make clear the role and responsibilities of the SRO" (Cray & Weiler, 2011). However, there is variability in the use of MOUs. In Colorado, it was found that 40% of a random selection of schools with SROs did not have either a memorandum of understanding (MOU) or policy reference outlining the role of the SRO (Cray & Weiler, 2011). In addition, few SRO organizaations conduct "useful and valid" assessments of their programs, further complicating a clear picture of the roles or effectiveness of SROs (Finn, Townsend, Shively & Rich, 2005; Myrstol, 2011).

Even with these limitations, participants at the conference continued to ask about the expectations, generally, of SROs. These expectations vary. In one study of Alaska residents, SROs were expected to reduce delinquency among students, improve police-public relations, and contribute to student understanding of the law and careers in law enforcement (Myrstol, 2011). Advocating for grants for SROs in 1998, Colorado Senator Ben Campbell stated the expectation that school resource officers would develop and expand community justice initiatives and train students in conflict resolution (American Civil Liberties Union, 2017). On the other hand, some teachers expect SROs to help with maintenance in the hallways or other public spaces such as the cafeteria (Coon & Travis, 2012). Further, principals may see discipline as the job of the SRO, while SROs may see themselves more as counselors or law educators (Coon & Travis, 2012).

The National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO) has proposed the "Triad Model," outlining its own expectations of the ways in which SROs will function in schools. The Triad proposes three main roles of SROs: educator, informal counselor, and law enforcer (see Figure 1). In the role of educator, SROs might provide guest lectures on policing as a career, alcohol and drug awareness, gangs, crime prevention, motor vehicle safety, and conflict resolution (Police Foundation, 2016). As informal counselors, SROs might refer or report students to professionals in mental health

services, child protective services, domestic violence agencies, or family counseling (Police Foundation, 2016). Finally, the role of law enforcer is the one which might sound most familiar; SROs might ensure the campus is safe from internal and external threats, address crime on campus, serve as hall monitors, truancy officers, or crossing guards, or respond to off-campus criminal activity involving students (Police Foundation, 2016). The model is used to advocate for well-rounded SROs who can "contribute to the safe-schools team," consisting of educators, child-welfare officials and juvenile justice officials (NASRO, 2013).

Figure 1. NASRO Triad Model

Adapted from Canady (2018)

It is noteworthy that all roles in the model -- counselor, teacher, and law enforcement officer – are given significant weight. This is echoed in NASRO's description of the activities in which SROs might engage (2019). NASRO notes that in addition to traditional law enforcement, SROs might engage in such activities as, "listening to student concerns about bullying" (informal counselor), "scheduling emergency drills in conjunction with other local agencies" (law enforcement officer), and "helping students with their homework, playing basketball, and sharing dinner together during extended school-day programs" (teacher/informal counselor). These are presented by NASRO without priority; all seem to be considered acceptable/accepted

activities for SROs. Indeed, benefits to the presence of SROs have been shown from fulfillment of the roles of teacher and counselor, with schools with SROs in these roles experiencing lower rates of violence and discipline issues (James, Logan & Davis, 2015).

In the face of such myriad expectations from national organizations, states, and schools, what are the real, day-to-day tasks of SROs in schools? SROs spend time patrolling facilities and grounds, responding to crime/disorder reports from school staff, and investigating leads about crime and disorder, although officers report doing these things more frequently than do principals (Coon & Travis, 2012). SROs' presence in schools has also been associated with an increase in emergency planning (American Civil Liberties Union, 2017).

There is also an established discrepancy in the realities of SROs based on the type of school at which the officer is stationed. SROs in large high schools (1,000 students or more) are more likely to carry a firearm and dress in uniform, although SROs in city schools are least likely to carry a firearm, spray, or stun gun compared to their counterparts in town schools. The rates of carrying a firearm, spray, or stun gun are only slightly higher in city schools than in rural schools (Cray & Weiler, 2011). Conference participants highlighted that the realities, like the expectations, differ based on the school context. What SROs actually do seems to be more focused in the law enforcement leg of the Triad, rather than education or counseling. Participants further stated that SROs serve in diverse roles, though not all are necessarily appropriate.

How do SROs make the transition to schools?

Conference participants were concerned with how SROs, who begin their careers as sworn law enforcement officials in the community unlike other school security personnel such as security guards, make the transition to schools. Who do they answer to in the "chain of command"? Who pays their salaries, and who is involved in the hiring process? Is the job of policing a school stimulating enough for an officer who was formerly policing an entire community, and if not, do these officers become

disengaged? This section describes how many SROs transition from traditional law enforcement into schools.

A 2013 US Department of Justice Report warns schools about the challenges of asking an officer to transition from law enforcement to an SRO position. The report points out,

> There are institutional obstacles on both sides that can be either philosophical or operational in nature. Philosophical conflicts often relate to the differing organizational cultures of police departments and schools. Police are focused on public safety, schools on education. These different perspectives on school safety can be challenging for an SRO. Many school-based police officers must play dual roles, navigating between school and police cultures (Raymond, 2013).

These dual roles vary by school and district and by race, depending on who the officer reports to. In a 2018 survey of 399 SROs, 57% listed their employer as the local police or sheriff's department, 20% the school police department, and 23% reported working for "other" (Education Week Research Center, 2018). The breakdown remains consistent across urbanicities, but interestingly, Black officers were more likely to work for school police departments while White officers were more likely to work for sheriff's departments. Rosiak (2009) agree that schools and law enforcement have different missions and different perspectives. These lines become blurred because officers working in schools are held to different rules. For example, while a patrol officer needs probable cause for a search, an SRO only needs reasonable suspicion (2009). Further, there may be issues of jurisdiction between principals and SROs as to who is responsible for enacting what types of discipline (Rosiak, 2009). In many cases, these rules are spelled out in an MOU or other policy document. In the absence of an MOU, confusion, inaction, or inappropriate action may result.

So how do individuals make the transition from traditional policing to school policing? NASRO Director of Operations Mac Hardy offered the New York Times some insight on how the process of transitioning from police officer to school resource officer might occur (though he asserts that these are not the best models): the "hostage"

situation whereby officers are assigned by their department to work for the school; the "retirees" who are older officers looking for an easier assignment, and the "vacationers" who enjoy having school holidays off (Saul, Williams & Hartocollis, 2018). Hardy encourages "go-getters" to seek the position of SRO, rather than "hostages," "retirees," or "vacationers," but doesn't specify how officers might choose such an assignment. Although little research was uncovered about exactly how officers are assigned to/choose SRO assignments, it is clearly a mix of self-determination on the part of the officer and forced compliance.

Temperament of SROs

While the functions of SROs are diverse, and how an SRO arrives to the role is also unclear, an even more ambiguous issue raised at the conference was the ideal temperament for SROs. A news item from one district in North Carolina reported that the school district was struggling to find officers with the proper training and the right temperament; in the words of the article, those who could "protect and mentor" (Le, 2018). The local county sheriff's office sought individuals with good communication skills and those who could be understanding with students. Feeling that officers freshly minted at the academy were not a sound choice, they put out a call for officers who were retired, or who were looking to transfer, seeking individuals with "law enforcement experience and good people skills" (Le, 2018). These skills include an "even temperament," suggesting that a certain level of maturity and stability is needed (North Carolina Public Schools, 2017).

A U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) report recommends screening for officers who like kids, are calm, approachable, patient, and are not easily flustered by kids, in addition to the criteria one might expect of any law enforcement official, including hard work, dependability, integrity, and the ability to work independently (Finn, Townsend, Shively & Rich, 2005). Survey data from SROs themselves recommend: the ability to work effectively with students within the age range of the school; the ability to work with parents; the ability to work with principals and other school administrators; knowledge of school-based legal issues, school resources, and social service resources; an understanding of child development and psychology and crime prevention through

environmental design; teaching and public speaking skills; and knowledge of school safety technology and implementation (Raymond, 2013). On top of this laundry list, the DOJ also recommended training in the areas of community policing, legal issues, cultural fluency, problem solving, safe school preparation, child development, mental health intervention, and classroom management (Raymond, 2013). It seems the right SRO is a combination of raw personality materials and substantial school-focused training.

Whatever the appropriate temperament for succeeding in this position, it impacts the effectiveness of the SRO. In a School Resource Officer Intergovernmental agreement prepared by consultants for a district in Illinois, “the success of the SRO-to-school-to-community relationship is correlated with the temperament and personality of the SRO within the established culture and norms of that school and community” (Provenzale & Pencyla, 2017). This may be because, as the US Department of Justice report on assigning police to schools asserts, “officers in schools are highly visible and regularly interact with students, faculty, and parents. They can serve as role models for students and can affect faculty and parental perceptions of police” (Raymond, 2013).

Further data are needed on the types of screening, per the recommendation of the DOJ report that could be implemented practically when hiring SROs. The DOJ admits, however, that research to date does not document measures to guide SRO selection or training, or to match the temperament of candidates with the norms of the school (Raymond, 2013). Once appropriate measures are developed and shown valid, they can be added to the hiring process and SRO memoranda of understanding (MOUs).

SROs and arrests: are they pushing students into the “pipeline?”

There has been some question as to whether the lines between enforcement of the law and enforcement of school rules have become blurred. For example, the ACLU reported that incidents of school rule breaking in the presence of SROs have escalated to arrest and criminal charges, rather than being dealt with through immediate in-house school discipline (2017). Teske (2011) found that the placement of SROs in schools in

Clayton County, Georgia was associated with a startling increase in referrals to the juvenile justice system, with an average of 89 referrals per year in the 1990s versus 1,400 in 2004. Black students were also more likely to be referred to law enforcement or arrested at school than were white students (American Civil Liberties Union, 2017: Blad & Harwin, 2017).

Arrests in high school have a range of nonproductive outcomes. In a study of NLS 1997 data, first time arrest in high school doubled the likelihood of high school dropout (Sweeten, 2006). Students who are arrested, like those suspended or expelled, are cut off from daily instruction and have academic and social difficulty re-entering their school and classes. Further, arrests in high school may threaten students' legal rights, which in turn threaten their basic rights of dignity, respect, and safety (Theriot & Cuellar, 2016). Feelings of safety and respect, they argue, have been associated with stronger school connectedness, better academic performance, and better relationships between school staff and students (Theroit & Cuellar, 2016).

A survey of SROs in the state of Delaware presents a portrait of how SROs make the decision to arrest, with both encouraging and troubling results. On one hand, 77% of SROs indicated that they refrained from making an arrest if the student had no history of misbehavior, and 55% refrained from making an arrest after a fight if the students indicated that the fight was over (Wolf, 2013). SROs also responded to the survey in ways that indicated that they recognized school discipline such as suspension as an intermediary step between misbehavior and arrests, a tool available in schools that is not available elsewhere. On the other hand, 77% of SROs reported making an arrest to calm a student down, 68% to show a student that actions have consequences, and 55% for minor offenses because teachers wanted the arrest to occur (Wolf, 2016).

This response is especially concerning, given Bracy's (2010) admonition that schools and law enforcement must work together in ways that reduce students' legal rights, including rights under the fourth amendment against unlawful search and seizure, Miranda rights, and the right to privacy. For instance, in Arizona, a female middle-school student was asked to strip to her underwear under suspicion that she was hiding prescription pills for distribution; no pills were found (Theriot & Cuellar,

2016). A court hearing determined that her fourth amendment rights were violated as the school had insufficient justification for the search. Theriot and Cuellar also contended that a middle-school student, average age of 12, would likely not know enough about their legal rights to protest such a search.

Schools with SROs are more likely to have vulnerable student populations, that is, lower income parents and higher percentages of minorities (Theriot, 2009). In more recent years, the placement of SROs has expanded to more affluent suburban districts, with the combined use of *both* SROs and security guards becoming more most common in high-minority (particularly Black) schools (Servoss, 2018). Students in these schools are at greater risk of having their rights compromised (Losen, 2018).

Wolf (2013) noted that students can also be arrested more easily and for more minor offenses when an arresting officer is present. This is apparent in incidents such as the arrest of two six-year-olds by an SRO in Florida in September of 2019. The children were charged with misdemeanor battery, handcuffed, and taken via police vehicle to a juvenile facility for fingerprinting and mug shots (Chiu, 2019). Their grandmother described their behavior as “throwing a tantrum in class.” Such bizarre occurrences highlight both the risks of having an arresting officer on a school campus, and the need for screening and training SROs for the age groups they will encounter at school.

However, simply having an SRO in a school is not associated with more arrests when viewed on a broader scale. Indeed, no-arrest schools are most common overall. Government data from 1915-1916 show that no students were arrested in 79 percent of schools with only an SRO. Two-thirds of schools with both an SRO and a security guard had no student arrests (Servoss, 2018).

Further, SRO presence is associated with more arrests for specific infractions such as disorderly conduct, and with decreased arrests for assault and weapons charges (Theriot, 2009). This suggests that the presence of an officer yields more arrests “out of convenience” for minor infractions – the officer is already there – but may be deterring students from fighting or bringing weapons to school. These trends are

common to other types of officers as well. Overall, SROs arrest at the same rate as non-school officers when confronted with felony offences (May, Barranco, Stokes, Robertson, & Haynes, 2016).

There is emerging evidence that the role the SRO plays in the school environment may be what determines whether or not their presence in school leads to more student arrests. Servoss (2018) found that in schools where SROs take on roles like mentoring students, teaching law-related coursework, training teachers and staff in crime prevention strategies, coordinating with outside law enforcement and emergency services, and carrying out security patrol and enforcement, there was no greater likelihood of arresting students. However, there were significantly more student arrests in schools where the SROs were involved in maintaining school discipline, recording and reporting discipline problems, and involvement in determining if student behaviors were illegal, and in turn, deemed worthy of their arrest.

The relationship between SRO presence and arrests and the processes that lead to this relationship are complex. In addition to arrests, the presence of police officers is related to higher rates of exclusionary discipline practices such as suspension and expulsion (Fisher & Hennessy, 2015). These practices, even though they may be necessary for the class to function, can reduce social cohesion and impact the individual's learning and future behavior. It is also argued that removing disruptive students from the classroom increases other students' feelings of safety and reduces the impacts of trauma (Perry & Morris, 2014).

Mental Health as a Security Measure

"***School chiefs rank improving mental health of students as top goal***."[8] This headline, based on a survey of school superintendents in New York State, reflects the reality that today's school are ill-equipped to deal with the mental health needs of students. Mental health was not originally a focus of the conference, but surfaced as a considerable problem in every session. Three aspects were discussed: (1) the need for mental health services to be available to students who are anxious, depressed, or

[8] Headline in *Buffalo News,* November 27, 2019.

traumatized with the ultimate goal of reducing serious acts of violence; (2) the deficit in mental health professionals and programs in American schools; and (3) the need for training for school staff and others, including school guards, to effectively assist students with mental health issues.[9]

Conference participants commented on the *reactivity* of schools and communities to major events such as school shootings. Most often these events lead to an influx of physical security measures (e.g. metal detectors, police, security cameras, etc.). However, when considering the safety and security of schools, participants agreed that more attention needs to be focused on students and their psychological wellbeing and the need for a positive and supportive school environment.

This section discusses the relevant mental health concerns facing students as presented in existing research and by the conference experts. We examine the questions: How do mental health issues become issues of school security? How can schools provide mental health support? And finally, where are the mental health professionals?

How do mental health concerns become issues of school security?

There was debate among researchers and practitioners as to the role of mental health in school security incidents, but agreement on the importance of both physical and psychological safety. Physical safety can be provided by practical measures such as locked doors, visitor check-ins, and scans for contraband, whereas measures to promote psychological safety to reduce anxiety and depression and avoid events that might trigger a trauma response often are obscured in a multi-faceted school climate (Cowan, Vaillancourt, Rossen, & Pollitt, 2013).

[9] These issues have been of concern to the National School Boards Association (NSBA) and the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) for some time. The NSBA publication, *Fostering safer schools. A legal guide for school board members on school safety* (NSBA, 2018) was recommended by conference participants as being parallel to many of the perspectives presented in this report.

There are three identified contexts in which mental health issues become salient to school security: When individuals are exposed to acute or chronic stressful situations; When individual responses to such situations are aggressive and include attempts to harm others (including school shootings); When fear and anticipation generated by local or distant violent events are pervasive. According to the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN, 2003), trauma results when an individual is faced with an acute or chronic life event that threatens or harms the individual's physical or emotional safety. Traumatic events can negatively impact an individual's ability to function (SAMHSA, 2019). In children, they are termed "adverse childhood experiences" (ACEs), and include interpersonal violence (and bullying), accidents, witnessing violence, life-threatening illness, and also chronic abuse, neglect, household dysfunction, or persistent stress. As many as two-thirds of students have experienced one or more such events before the age of 17 (Felitti & Anda, 1997; McLaughlin et al., 2013; Saunders & Adams, 2014).

ACEs have been shown to be related to school-based violence (Adams, 2010; Forster, Gower, McMorris, & Borowsky, 2017; Robers et al., 2014). Data collected from the 2007 Minnesota Student Survey concluded that the risk for violence perpetration increased from 35% to 144% for each additional ACE reported, (Duke, Pettingell, McMorris, & Borowsky, 2010). Psychological and physiological reactions to trauma in general include an inability to respond effectively to stressors, aggression, behavior problems, and acts of violence at home and in school (Davis, Moss, Nogin, & Webb, 2016; Debellis & Zisk, 2014; NCTSN, 2003). In a school setting, these reactions and others interfere with learning and relationships with peers and school staff and can put others at risk of harm. An increase in family-based ACEs (e.g., household substance abuse, verbal abuse, physical or emotional abuse, exposure to intimate partner violence, sexual abuse, an incarcerated relative) significantly increases the probability of male students perpetrating physical violence, theft, or bringing a weapon to school (Forster et al., 2017). Students who have been the victims of abuse have higher rates of discipline referrals, specifically for disruptive behavior, aggression, defiance, and hyperactivity (Perfect et al., 2016).

In the extreme, traumatized students have the propensity to become school shooters (Langman, Petrosino, & Persson, 2018). In an analysis of 593 U.S. school shootings occurring between 1760 and 2013, Lee (2013) found that in 87% of these incidents, shooters indicated that they had been bullying victims. The Safe Schools Initiative completed by the U.S. Department of Education and Secret Service evaluated 37 school-based attacks occurring over 25 years. In the majority of cases, the shooter exhibited mental health problems prior to the attack including suicidal ideation, suicide attempts, and depression (Vossekuil et al., 2002).

These externalizing behaviors, significant family stressors, social skills deficits, and depression are reportedly the most concerning mental health issues faced by teachers, administrators, and security personnel (Reinke, Stormong, Herman, Purl, & Goel, 2011). If these are identified early, effective mental health interventions may be able to reduce the probability of major violent incidents.

What can school-based mental health professionals do to help?

Conference participants noted the shortage of mental health staff and resources in schools, citing large caseloads and an inability to meet the needs of every student. Teachers and principals feel that children in need are not receiving support due to a shortage of programs for students and their parents, appropriate staff training, an insufficient number of school mental health professionals, and funding for school-based mental health (Reinke et al., 2011). This appears to be the case indeed; according to recent data, 14 million students are in schools with police but no counselor, nurse, psychologist or social worker (ACLU, 2019).

At the same time, trauma or anxiety may be exacerbated by the schools themselves through the use of exclusionary discipline practices such as suspensions, expulsions, or law enforcement referrals, and through the use of simulated-intruder, lockdown/lockout drills, and even by the presence of armed police officers (Malafronte, 2018). Zhe and Nickerson (2007) identified five main drill procedures: evacuation, reverse evacuation, lockdown, shelter-in-place, and duck-cover-hold, appropriate to a range of threats, Their own evaluation of an intruder drill with middle-grade students

showed increases in knowledge of appropriate procedures, but no impact on students' anxiety or perceptions of safety. Parents and some psychologists argue that these drills could actually increase stress, anxiety, a sense of feeling at risk, as well as negatively alter a child's world view (Garcia-Navarro,Boyd, & Doubeck, 2019; Hamblin, 2018).

Despite the shortage of counselors, and despite scant scientific information, some services can be provided to students on a schoolwide scale. To begin with, it is often recommended that students and teachers be encouraged to report risky behaviors, whether they include withdrawal and depression, threats to people in school, outbursts of anger toward students and staff, or acquiring or threatening others with a weapon. This remains a logical but to-date undocumented approach to heading off violent events. But teachers are rarely trained to identify behaviors indicative of a larger problem or how to manage disruptive behaviors in the classroom. The National Institutes for Mental Health introduced a bill to U.S. Congress in 2015 calling for increased funding for mental health training for teachers and other school staff that would allow teachers to identify early warning signs of mental health conditions and link students with appropriate services (NAMI, 2015); this bill has yet to be passed. More recently, universal mental health screenings for all students have been recommended to identify students experiencing behavioral or emotional distress and connect those in need to early intervention. These screenings emphasize both prevention of ensuing problems and mental health and wellness (Dowdy et al., 2015).

The Healthy Students Initiative (SS/HS) is a Federal program designed to help schools incorporate a comprehensive framework to promote mental health, enhance school safety, and reduce youth violence and substance use (American Institutes for Research, 2018). Elements of this framework include services and programs focused on identification and prevention at the individual, classroom, school, family and community levels. The national evaluation of the effectiveness of the SS/HS Initiative reported positive and significant results including increased access to school and community based mental health services, fewer experiences of violence (Derzon et al., 2012), and increased ability for school staff to detect mental health problems among students (Center for Mental Health Services, 2010).

Strategies for dealing with individual students at risk of extreme behavior problems emphasize the need for the guidance for mental health professionals and training for school personnel. For example, disciplining a child harshly for being disruptive may lead to re-traumatization (SAMHSA & Justice Strategic Initiative, 2014), accompanied by a detachment and disengagement from others and an increase in disruptive behavior (Faer & Omojola, 2012). If the six-year-old girls handcuffed and arrested in Florida are brought to mind, trauma seems a likely outcome (Chiu, 2019).

In contrast, approaches to discipline that begin by recognizing signs and symptoms of trauma ("trauma informed"), can encourage a student to connect with teachers and other adults in the school environment, and to avoid engaging in violent behavior, experiencing suicidal thoughts, becoming pregnant, abusing substances, skipping school, or experiencing emotional distress (Blum, 2005; Hinnant et al., 2009). More broadly, socio-emotional learning (SEL) teaches individual self-awareness and self-management in the form of social awareness, handling one's emotions, coming up with appropriate solutions in bothersome situations, being aware of others' feelings, and showing empathy (Denham & Brown, 2010). It may comprise its own school curriculum or be embedded in regular classes or class projects (Common Sense education, 2017). SEL has been shown to be associated with improved students' attitudes to and involvement with school, reduced risky behavior, and increased academic success

Multitiered Systems of Support (MTSS) aim to improve student achievement by identifying mental and behavioral health needs and intervening early through integrated crisis prevention, wellness promotion, and evidence-based interventions that stimulate positive school climate. The most well-known elements of MTSS are Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and Response to Intervention (RTI). After implementing MTSS in Kansas schools, discipline referrals decreased by 77% (Reedy & Lacireno-Paquet, 2015). PBIS, implemented in over 9,000 schools (as of 2010), showed significant reductions in discipline referrals and suspensions in a five-year longitudinal experiment based in 37 elementary schools (Bradshaw, Mitchell & Leaf, 2010).

Trauma Systems Therapy (TST; Saxe, Ellis, & Brown, 2015) is a trauma-informed clinical and organizational model designed to identify triggers and address a child's emotional and environmental needs through use of a multidisciplinary team of providers, often including teachers, community providers, family members, and case managers. In a study of 124 children ages 3-20 receiving TST intervention, Ellis and colleagues (2012) observed increased emotion regulation, environmental stability, and overall functioning at post-test. Adolescent boys in a residential treatment facility demonstrated significant reductions in functional impairment after receiving TST (Brown, McCauley, Navalta, & Saxe, 2013).

The Positive Student Engagement Model for School Policing developed by Judge Steven Teske aims to reduce arrests by assessing the needs of disruptive students and linking them with a system of care (SOC; Teske, Huff, & Graves, 2013). The Teske model emphasizes viewing students holistically in order to determine need and linkage with resources. When implemented in Clayton County, Georgia, this targeted approach reduced out of school suspensions, increased graduation rates by 20%, reduced weapons on campus by 73%, reduced detainments by 86%, reduced court referrals by 67%, and decreased delinquent felony rates by almost 31% (Teske, 2011).

All of these approaches emphasize the psychological needs of the students. Most often it is trained mental health professionals in schools are in a position to identify these needs and who can help teachers and other staff members to choose and implement the appropriate strategies for assisting students.

Where are the mental health professionals?

Mental health professionals are school counselors, social workers, school psychologists and nurses charged with supporting and advocating for students and their families as they encounter barriers to physical and psychological safety (e.g. learning disabilities, community violence, mental health issues). School-based mental health (SBMH) professionals can provide education, training, and support to school staff (including SROs) and community members in dealing with students with behavior problems, crisis

intervention and behavioral planning. These functions are time-intensive and require the cooperation of teachers and other staff members.

However, there is currently a serious deficit in the number of mental health professionals in schools across the United States. According to the American School Counselor Association (ASCA), the average student-to-counselor ratio is 444:1, which is 78% greater than the recommended 250-to-1 ratio (ASCA, 2019; Losen & Whitaker, 2018). The National Association for School Psychologists (NASP) recommends one school psychologist per every 500-700 students – itself a tremendous load -- but districts are reporting 1400:1 ratios, and some as high as 4000:1 (NASP, 2019). Therefore, students are not provided with sufficient services and SBMH professionals feel overworked and unable to provide a supportive and accepting school environment for students. Due to lack of training, teachers often feel underprepared and inadequately trained to teach students with mental health concerns.

Increasing the number of SBMH professionals and broadening their roles would not only propagate supportive school environments, but could ultimately reduce the number of disciplinary referrals and acts of violence or misbehavior. Of the issues discussed in this report, this area has, perhaps, the largest gap between resources currently available and resources needed.

Synopsis: What is Known, and What do we Need to Know?

This report summarizes two continuous days of presentations and discussions by 28 intelligent, dynamic professionals and the published sources they provided. This synopsis classifies these according to four themes. It highlights, for each theme, *assumptions* elucidated by the participants, *findings from research that can be used in deciding school practice* (the "knowns"), and *questions that need to be answered* in order to improve school safety (the "unknowns").

The points raised in this synopsis have been selected from a larger set discussed at the conference to represent those deemed most pressing.[10] We urge researchers,

[10] According to the authors. We recognize that, if all 28 participants were to have votes on this, the list would be much longer and unresolvable. Our apologies to those whose favorite points were omitted.

educators, and security personnel to give priority to answering the questions raised here.[11]

IMPLEMENTATION OF SCHOOL SECURITY MEASURES

Assumptions

- Some level of physical security measures in American schools is needed to content the multiple stakeholders and protect students and staff who may be at risk of harm.
- Decisions about security measures should be made by representatives of various stakeholders, with knowledge of their effects and consideration of their costs to the school, district, or government agencies.
- Consideration should be given to tangential factors that may play on implicit biases of decision makers (e.g., size or racial composition of the student body).

The Knowns

- Implementation of security measures is increasing regularly, and spikes considerably after a violent incident occurs anywhere in the country, especially in neighboring counties and states.
- The costs are increasing regularly, creating financial stress for some districts and states, and impacting the budgets of schools least able to afford them.
- Subsidies from state and federal governments promote the implementation of security measures in urban and suburban schools.
- Security measures are disproportionately implemented in schools with high percentages of minority students (particularly African-American students) and large schools. Black students are also disproportionately subjected to exclusionary discipline.

[11] If we had to choose, we would recommend that research to address these questions be started immediately: Numbers 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 9. 11, 12, 13, 15, 18.

Unanswered Questions

- Can economists provide a way to compare the costs and benefits of security measures? (1)
- Can the costs be controlled or reduced in schools with less crime and misbehavior? (2)
- How can the rights of 'vulnerable populations' be protected against overuse or biased use of school security measures and discipline? (3)

EFFECTS OF SCHOOL SECURITY MEASURES

Assumptions

- Security measures, including police officers, are "here to stay."
- The use and the effects of school security measures, including SROs, should be monitored regularly and reported to internal and external bodies of policy makers.
- The reports should be reviewed regularly for positive and unintended effects of school security, including violations of students' civil rights (e.g., racial bias, right to privacy).
- Full-school threat assessments and practice drills should be employed to protect students and staff even if no violent event has occurred.
- Mental health professionals should be available to ameliorate possible trauma due to practice drills or violent events.

The Knowns

- There are few if any documented benefits associated with any single security measure in terms of students' physical or psychological welfare. There are very few exceptions to this.[12]

[12] Exceptions are metal detectors and police guards, which lower the number of weapons brought into school, and hall cameras that give administrators access to student behavior outside the classroom.

- Security measures in schools have unintended negative effects on students, including feelings of being *unsafe*, trepidation and trauma due to a high-security environment, and possible violations of civil rights.
- Multiple security measures create a school climate viewed as unfair, unwelcoming, and unsupportive to students, and thus promote oppositional behavior and dropping out.

Unanswered Questions

- ❖ Is there an optimal level of security for schools, based on their risk status, that balances the realistic need for safety against the feeling of a "prison-like" environment? (4)
- ❖ What are the attitudes of students, teachers, administrators, and others toward security measures in their school? (5)
- ❖ Can security measures contribute to a positive climate in which students feel safe, treated fairly, and supported personally and academically? (6)
- ❖ Do less-than-optimal school climates and school experiences (academic failure, bullying, being retained in grade, and punishments such as suspension or expulsion) produce trauma that leads to violent acts? (7)
- ❖ Given data on school shootings recorded in recent years, can we develop research designs that predict future acts of violence? (8)

POLICE IN SCHOOL (SROs)

Assumptions

- ✓ SROs can be important members of the school community if they have the proper temperament and are prepared properly work with school-age youth.
- ✓ SROs can perform multiple functions in the school besides law enforcement, including education of others, and counseling when the situation calls for it. These roles often are not well described in writing.
- ✓ SROs may not fit "naturally" into the roles they are required to perform in school, a factor that can lead to conflict and/or failure to respect students' rights or treat them appropriately.

- ✓ It is important for SROs to work together with teachers, administrators, and mental health professionals to understand each others' functions and to work together effectively.

The Knowns

- The presence of one or more police officers in a school, in certain locations, results in highly disproportionate numbers of arrests. The specific conditions that lead to disproportionate school-to-prison transitions, and the problems they create, have not been identified.
- Police presence is generally appreciated by school administrators.
- In specific situations, SROs become friends of students and associates of , teachers and other school staff. The specific conditions that lead to this have not been identified.
- Some professional development for SROs is available (e.g., thorough NASRO) but is not subscribed to by all and has not been evaluated extensively.

Unanswered Questions

- ❖ What functions do administrators, teachers, mental health professionals, and parents *expect* SROs to perform? These expectations are not defined except in MOUs that often differ from school to school. (9)
- ❖ How do SROs view their own roles in schools? (10)
- ❖ What do students expect SROs to do? How do expectations differ by age, race/ethnicity, academic performance, or history of "getting in trouble?" (11)
- ❖ What do SROs *actually do* in schools on a habitual basis? How does this compare to the expectations? How can their effectiveness be assessed? (12)
- ❖ What kinds of selection procedures and professional development prepare SROs to serve in their roles best (E.g., Avoiding arrests or other harsh disciplinary practices to the extent possible; Being alert to students' civil rights; Respecting the abilities and needs of each individual)? (13)
- ❖ How can the interactions of SROs with other school personnel be optimized so as to work collaboratively? What kinds of professional development for SROs

and school staff can lead to a welcoming, fair, and supportive school climate? (14)

MENTAL HEALTH AND SCHOOL SECURITY

Assumptions

- ✓ Mental health issues are entangled with school security in several ways: First, persons who have committed violent acts are often found to be suffering from mental health problems. Second, acute or chronic exposure to disturbing events, experienced at home or school is inversely related to psychological wellbeing; Third, being exposed to acts of violence in particular can lead to anxiety, fear, aggression, and emotional and physical withdrawal.
- ✓ Schools and school staff should bear responsibility for assessing the psychological welfare of school-age youth, which can be a precursor to academic success.
- ✓ School mental health professionals should provide an outlet for students to express their anxieties and frustrations, and for following students at-risk of violence through ensuing grades.
- ✓ School mental health professionals should play important roles in schoolwide efforts to emphasize trauma-informed approaches to discipline, in the training of SROs to interact appropriately with school-age youth, and in creating a positive school climate. They should be considered preventative school security measures rather than services to be sacrificed for more traditionally conceived measures such as guards, metal detectors, and dog sniffs.

The Knowns

- There is a serious deficit of mental health professionals (school counselors, school psychologists, social workers, nurses) trained and available to work in school settings. This reflects both the relative importance with which their work is viewed and limited employment opportunities.

- There is a deficit in the training of mental health professionals to perform the many functions they could help with, individually and in concert with SROs, principals and other school staff.

Unanswered Questions

- Do school-based practices, including drills to prepare students for a violent event, on the one hand, and exclusionary discipline on the other, increase trauma and proclivity for violent acts? (15)
- How can schoolwide mental health screenings be used to predict possible acts of violence by individuals? (16)
- How can mental health professionals be trained to work with other school personnel to create effective multi-disciplinary programs of support for the psychological wellbeing of students? (17)

POSTSCRIPT

In addition to the themes considered at the two-day conference, one general recommendation arose repeatedly--the need for technical support and assistance to schools and districts to help with data collecting and review, decision making, and guidance in best practices in all aspects of school safety. This should be provided by committees of administrators, teachers, mental health professionals, and security personnel within schools and districts, and by organizations serving broader geographic areas. The Department of Education's "Regional Educational Laboratories" were cited as a mode for the latter. They serve as information clearinghouses to interpret the findings of the many research studies on particular topics for practitioners and other researchers. The Laboratories also host interdisciplinary conferences to convey information to practitioners, of the sort described in this report. Participants urged that technical support for school security be implemented as quickly as is feasible.

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APPENDIX
School Security: Identifying and Addressing Sources of Inequity
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Notes: Two representatives of Children's Defense Fund (DC) also attended
Biosketches of all participants on the conference website.
American University in Washington graciously hosted the entire conference.