

Plainville Citizen Op-Ed May, 2018

The safety and well-being of our school district community remains our number one priority. With the passing of the 2018-19 school district budget, we are in the process of hiring a School Resource Officer (SRO) at Plainville High School to further enhance safety and security in all Plainville Community Schools.

The National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO) defines “School Resource Officer” as any law enforcement officer whose primary duty involves their presence in an educational institution. The NASRO model is the oldest in existence and arguably the originator in school based police training. NASRO provides training to law enforcement officers based on their time honored TRIAD concept approach. The TRIAD concept involves the officer performing three functions, as a law enforcement officer, a teacher, and a counselor. By training law enforcement officers to educate, counsel, and protect our school communities, the police build bonds of trust with students, parents, and faculty. NASRO trained school resource officers lead by example and promote a positive image of law enforcement to our youth.

In the role of teacher, the School Resource Officer will conduct a wide variety of classroom presentations for the students. By spending time in the classroom, the officer will be able to provide the students a better understanding of the role a law enforcement officer plays in the legal system as well as the basis for laws in general. The officer will also be available to conduct workshops and other seminars for faculty members, parent groups, and community groups.

In the role of counselor, the School Resource Officer becomes the trained listener. Developing and maintaining a positive rapport with the student body is a large

part of what makes a School Resource Officer effective in the school. The School Resource Officer will make him/herself available throughout the school day for students who may have the desire to speak with the officer. The SRO will be trained to recognize potentially violent situations and defuse them, and act as a liaison between the police department, the community, and the schools. This will be extremely useful, especially in cases where students have lost their way or may be heading in a less than constructive direction.

The School Resource Officer also acts to bridge communication among administration, school faculty, the student body, and the Police Department. Effective communication and the timely sharing of information between all parties concerned will play a large role in making the school resource program a success. The potential for the SRO to develop insight into the mindset of our youth will make for an overall safer school environment. By looking for behavioral signs that warn of potential trouble, police and school officials can intervene before a tragedy occurs.

In addition to all the duties and responsibilities required of a Plainville Police Officer, the School Resource Officer will:

- Work closely with school administrators and the local juvenile authorities in an effort to provide and maintain our schools as a safe haven conducive to learning.
- Deliver lectures and provide information on law, police duties and other related topics that support school curriculum.
- Investigate suspected crimes, reports findings, and arrest or refer suspected individuals.
- Identify and remove trespassers from school property.
- Provide security for students by preventing criminal acts against students or their property.

- Monitor school hallways and parking areas.
- Intervene in student arguments - talk with all persons involved discouraging future altercations.
- Establish and maintain open communications with relevant youth welfare agencies.
- Provide student referrals to youth agencies.
- Assist in all criminal investigations that originate in school.
- Work collaboratively with the police department patrol and investigative units to investigate crime, develop information about crime, and to prevent crime.
- Provide information to other law enforcement officers and agencies relating to criminal activity and other juvenile related problems.
- Coordinate and implement crime prevention programs as assigned.
- Build a rapport between youth and law enforcement.
- Provide limited student counseling, on and off campus, on various topics, i.e., death of family and friends, abuse, alcohol / drug abuse, anger management, etc.

Having a School Resource Officer in any school is not a guaranteed deterrent to the type of unspeakable acts that has become all too familiar across the United States and our world, but it is an additional step toward further enhancing the overall safety and security within the Plainville school district. The value of a School Resource Officer is not measured by that officer's ability to react to an act of violence, rather it is realized in the relationships they create and in the information they gather, share, and act upon in a timely manner. We look forward to working together with the School Resource Officer in our school district to preserve and maintain a positive and safe learning environment for all Plainville students.