

Memorandum

DATE: May 15, 2013

TO: Mr. Edward J. Mehrhof, Superintendent of Monroe-Woodbury School District

FROM: 24892F, Policy Analyst

RE: Policy Enhancement for Monroe-Woodbury School District

The recent incident at Sandy Hook Elementary in Newtown, CT suggests that local schools are still vulnerable to violent incidents. In a more recent and closer to home incident, a troubled high school teen from Chester, NY was arrested for threatening to bring a machine gun to school and kill people (Times Herald Record, 2012). National shooting statistics reveal that since 1992 there have been a total of 386 school shootings in America and 69% committed by juveniles between the ages of 10 and 19 (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2007). It was also reported by the CDC; in 2007 nationally 2224 homicides were linked to the same age category (Logan, 2011). Mr. Edward J. Mehrhof is the Superintendent of Monroe-Woodbury School District and questions: how can policy #5681 be amended to prevent or deter a mass shooting incident?

This memo examines security policy #5681 of the Monroe-Woodbury School District. The current District security policy fails to provide adequate safety measures that prevent or deter a mass shooter. This memo will introduce options to the Monroe-Woodbury Superintendent for the purposes of future considerations. According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation there have been 43 mass shootings across 25 US States in the last four years averaging one mass shooting per month.

Assessment of the problem

To better understand the decision making process within the district we must first understand the structure and functionality behind decision making within the school district. The Monroe-Woodbury Central School District is located in the towns of Monroe, Harriman, Woodbury and parts of the towns of Tuxedo, Chester and Blooming Grove located within Orange County, NY.

According to the New York State Comptroller's Office financial audit report (2010-2011). The Monroe-Woodbury School District is governed by the School Board which is comprised of nine elected members. The school district serves a population of approximately 35000 residents. The Board is responsible for the general management and control of the District's financial and educational affairs, implementing or amending policy and appointing the school capital superintendent. The Superintendent of Schools is the Chief Executive Officer of the District and is responsible, along with other administrative staff, for the day-to-day management of the District under the direction of the School Board. The Superintendent is also responsible for proposing measures that maintain or create a safe environment for all students, staff and visitors within the district.

¹ The Monroe-Woodbury School District is composed of: Monroe-Woodbury High School 9-12, Monroe-Woodbury Middle School 6-8, Pine Tree Elementary 2-5, North Main Elementary 2-5, Central Valley Elementary 2-5, Sapphire Elementary K-1, Smith Clove Elementary K-1. The District's student population is approximately 7,400 students.

The Assistant Superintendent for Business is responsible for the District's finances, accounting records and financial reports. Seven schools operate within the District; each school is assigned specific grades with approximately 7,400 students, 950 full-time employees and 350 part-time employees. The District's budgeted expenditures for the 2010-11 and 2011-12 fiscal years were approximately \$148 million for 2010-11 and \$149 million for 2011-12, and were funded primarily with real property taxes and State aid. The New York State Division of School Accountability conducted an audit of the school district's budget and as of June 30, 2011, the District had approximately \$13.6 million in reserve operational surplus which provides the means and funding for any unexpected cost for the School District.

Security policy # 5681 currently only provides guidelines for hiring unarmed Board of Education security guards. The hiring process encompasses a state civil service exam. Each qualifying candidate may be selected from a qualifying list issued by New York State Division of Criminal Justice, Office of Public Safety. Each School District is required to draw from the list of qualified applicants according to needed manpower. Candidates are not trained in armed aspects of security nor does the school district policy require such pre-qualifications.

The School Board appoints a school safety team which is composed of one board member, student, teacher, and administrator per school. Unfortunately participants are not required to possess any background in security, training in target hardening, security design and/or proper emergency response planning. Each school principal is responsible to implement a building level security plan. The current District School Board is empowered to adapt an amendment to the current policy #5681. The current school security policy does not allow Board of Education security personnel to be armed within school property. The result of not allowing armed security personnel weakens the physical and psychological perception of a secured environment. This weakness creates a high potential risk for a mass shooter incident. The security of school premises is absolutely vital to ensure the personal safety of staff, students and visitors. Amending current policy #5861 is therefore highly relevant to a school's overall health and safety. It is the responsibility of school board members, the state educational department and the federal government to provide an environment that is safe and conducive for learning.

Literature Review

According to research performed by Finn, Shively, McDevitt, Lassiter, and Rich (2005), when an armed uniformed presence is present at public schools students reported feeling safer. Additional research also indicates that although teachers and administrators are initially apprehensive toward a uniformed armed presence that the apprehension fades over time (Finn, Shively, Townsend, and Rich, 2005). According to Robies-Pina (2012), any environment that incorporates a uniformed armed presence will enhance the perception of safety and security for children and parents. Additionally, sociological research demonstrated positive results when measuring social environmental settings, the independent variable of a uniformed armed presence and provided positive results on the perception of safety and security for both children and parents (Fick & Ana, 2007).

School Districts would benefit from a continuum of testing and updating emergency plans with evolving tactical concepts from law enforcement and emergency management professionals. By adapting effective methods administrators, faculty and staff will learn and practice the actions that would be necessary in a critical situation. For example, simply adapting a slogan that is currently being used by the New York City Transit System, "see something say something," can

create an additional security layer for school safety. This simple adaptation will help a school district maintain an emphasis of reporting suspicious behaviors or activities in or around schools (Tuffy, 2004).

These same principles are now being adopted by many primary and secondary schools. For example, according to the Norman Thomas High School Dean, Jeanne Pier, in New York City the school has adopted the use of an anonymous drop box for reporting ill or suspicious student behaviors Edwards (2010), Currently public schools in America are focusing on target hardening which is the ability to create a greater physical and psychological deterrence to people that intend to carry out criminalities on school grounds. Often school organizations have the ability to accomplish target hardening by adapting more of a layered approach in security strengthening. For example, the use of cameras, buzzer systems, trained staff, lock down drills and armed security at public schools creates a multi layered approach to safety. The implementation of school resource officers is the latest effort by both school and local government leaders to promote school safety. Ridgefield High School located in the town of Clark, WA is currently using armed security to provide a front line of defense for schools when compared to Sandy Hook Elementary in Newtown, CT which did not. Schools that fail to implement specific measures to address major incidents such as a mass shooting are creating environments not conducive for teaching, learning and social development (Black, 2009).

In contrast over the past decade public schools across America have been forced to transform into a high security environment. Contemporary public schools can be described as high security environments, complete with police officers (SROs), security guards, surveillance cameras, metal detectors, in-school counseling, locker searches, drug sniffing dogs and school issued identifying tags (Dinkes, Cataldi, and Lin-Kelly, 2007). Parental concern on preserving children's constitutional rights has become the forefront of many debates (Bracy, 2010). Administrators are criticized for teaming up with SROs and violating students Fourth Amendment, Fifth Amendment and Privacy Rights within schools (Bracy, 2010).

Educational institutions cannot treat all security threats equally (Black, 2009). The concept of panacea (cure-all) solutions for security measures is truly a recipe for failure. School administrators must realize that one remedy to prevent or reduce the likelihood of a mass shooting is to design security measures at two levels of execution: pro-active and re-active. The pro-active design involves physical barriers in place that serve as a physical deterrence and also psychological deterrence to possible intruders. Target hardening is usually accomplished through the use of omni-presence, video-surveillance, layered security design, limited entry points for students and visitors, training and accountability (Bracey, 2011).

An additional pro-active method may also provide the availability of mental health counseling. According to recent research conducted by Nader, Kathleen, Pollack and Williams (2012), youth who were involved in mass shooting incidents displayed early on psychological traits of aggression, isolation, victimization and also demonstrated a need for social vindication. Because of these traits, circumstances, and environmental factors, counseling may become instrumental in reducing suicides, shooting rampages, and aggression in troubled youth. Juvenile depression and suicides often demonstrate emotional and physical disconnect and does not contribute to positive outcomes hindering the quest of creating safe school environment (Nader & Kathleen, 2012).

The re-active approach incorporates a design of preventing casualties. The application of lockdown drills is considered an effective tool against mass shooting incidents. According to John-Michael Keyes from the ILOVEUGUYS foundation, there are four re-active methods: Lockout, Lockdown, Evacuate, and/or Take Shelter. These four methods are parts of a recipe for a standard response protocol and are utilized as a school safety measure to address mass shooting incidents. The four measures will offer schools re-active responses that will help reduce casualties in mass shooting incidents. This design allows for a predictable course of action; for example as an event unfolds so does the course of action. If an intruder alert is activated, school staff may implement a lockdown; however if an intruder is isolated, responders would assist school staff to evacuate teachers, students and administrators to a designated safe zone (Keyes, 2009). It should be noted that the primary procedure used when an alert of a mass shooter is transmitted is the lockdown procedure. To minimize being targeted, the institutions population should find an area to hide and lock or barricade doors as to limit target exposure to the shooter. In addition, all cell phones and electronic devices should be powered off to limit the shooters focus, (Buerger & Buerger, 2010).

According to the New York City Police Department report, 96% of active shooters are male. Ninety-eight percent of them are solo attackers, and 36% of attacks involved more than one weapon. Forty-six percent of active shootings ended with force applied by law enforcement, security officers, or bystanders. Finally, 40% of shooters committed suicide or attempted suicide during the incident (New York City Police Department, 2012).

While current social and economic times hold few things as precious, children continue to be our most treasured possession in society. The topic of safety within schools creates concerns among stakeholders such as parents, students, teachers, political leaders and those of authority that have a vested interest, whether personal or political, for our children’s safety. According to Black (2009), research proved that when an armed uniformed officer is present at public schools, students reported feeling safer. Additional research also indicates that although teachers and administrators are initially apprehensive toward a uniformed armed presence that the apprehension fades over time (Finn, Shively, Townsend, & Rich, 2005).

Stakeholder’s Analysis

Table 1: Offers an assessment of stakeholders who have an ability to create a significant impact on the proposed security policy. The following graph represents a list of critical stakeholders that will play an instrumental role for decision making. The left vertical column represents essential categories needed for decision making. The top lateral column is composed of names and titles of individuals who play a critical role in decision making. All additional columns will contain topics of consideration and will be rated low, moderate or high depending on their impact on the decision-making process.

Stakeholders	Malike Carrera, PTA President of the M/W School District	Dr. Michael J. Digeronimo, School Board President	Ray Hodges, President of the Teachers Union	Carol Herb, President of Administrative Union	James C. Purcell, Mayor
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Description	Elected by Parents of Monroe-Woodbury School District	Elected at large by town residence	Elected by union members	Elected by union members	Elected at large by town residence
Source of Influence	Responsible for protecting the student health and welfare	Responsible for approving budget spending	Maintaining the confidence of teachers	Maintaining confidence of administrative staff	Responsible enacting policy that is in the best of constituents
Causation	Increased national school shootings	Increased parental concerns for school safety	Concerns For teachers safety	Concerns for administrative safety	Voter concern for school safety
Crisis	No Security safety policy to address mass shootings incidents	Not providing adequate funding for security budget	Health and welfare of union are at high risk	Health and welfare of union members are at high risk	Limited resources to increase school security=high liability
Proximity	Direct influence on policy implementation	Approves new security measures spending	Must provide safe teaching environment to union members	Must provide safe work environment to union members	Present referendum to tax payers to supplement security added cost for schools
Means	Political power in voting	Fund new security measures	Push for safe work environment	Push for safe work environment	Supplement security cost with additional tax increase
Ends Desired	Requires the establishment of safe learning environment as per NYS Education Law §3012-c	Improved safety for all school children	Improved safety for union members	Improved safety for civilian workforce	Satisfy constituents' concerns with school safety
Essential?	Critical in influencing decision process	Critical in decision process and funding new measures	May have influence on school board decision making process	May have influence on school board decision making process	May formulate new police policy and create new legislation

The above assessment reveals critical stakeholders which play a key role in facilitating the change in policy which is needed to improve current security measures. All stakeholders are elected at large and have the support and trust of the voters. Careful consideration should be given to each stakeholder and will allow all stakeholders to play an instrumental part for any new policy adaptations.

Options Specification

It will be incumbent upon the school board to review the vial options presented in this memorandum. The following section will present alternatives that may be used to strengthen school security in an efficient and effective manner. Mass shooting events have forced organizations to rethink target hardening strategies. The Monroe-Woodbury School District must adapt a front-line-of-defense for its district in order to prevent or deter mass shooting incidents.

The following graph depicts four options that may be considered as an option solution for policy #5861. Option one will consider Status Quo (do nothing) and maintain current security practices. Option two will consider the impact of adapting armed security and creating a front line of defense for schools. Option three considers retraining current security staff in armed aspects of security. The last considers the implementation of mental health counselors in schools for the purposes of providing mental health counseling for troubled students.

Option Specification

Options	No Change: Status Quo	Adopt Armed Security (SROs)	Retrain Current School Security in Armed Aspects	Provide Mental Health Counseling for Troubled Students
Description of Policy Change	No change to policy #5681	Amend policy #5681 to allow The hiring Full/Part/Retired Police Officers as SROs	Amend policy #5681 to Train Current School District Security in Tactical Firearms Response	Amend policy #5681 to allow the district to hire licensed mental health counselors
Implementation Responsibility	none	Provide a front line of defense against a mass shooter and a safer environment	Responsible for school security and armed Confrontations	Provide Professional Mental Counseling
Mechanism of Effect	Risk Mass Shooting Incident	Provide Target Hardening for Schools	Provide Target Hardening for Schools	Provides additional avenues of attaining Mental Health
Cost	No Increase	Moderate Cost	Significant Cost	Significant Cost
Legal Requirements	none	Fulfilling State requirements for carrying guns and trainings	Fulfill State requirements for carrying guns and training	Licensed Mental Health Professionals and Consent from Parents to provide Counseling

Malik Carrera, 1st Stakeholder	Wants a safer environment	Strong Support	No Support	Moderate Support
Dr. Michael J. Digeronimo, 2nd Stakeholder	Wants a safer environment	Strong Supportive	No Support	Supportive
Ray Hodges 3rd Stakeholder	Wants a safer environment	Strong Support	No Support	Supportive
Carol Herb, 4th Stakeholder	Wants a safer environment	Strong Support	No Support	Moderate Support
James C. Purcell, 5th Stakeholder	Wants a safer environment	Strong Support	No Support	Moderate Support
Degree of Consensus	Strong Support	Strong Support	Low Support	Moderate Support

Analyzing the options specification chart reveals that the category of armed police in schools is strongly supported by stakeholders over the other options. The option of status quo does not offer room for change and without change you cannot expect different positive outcomes. Amending the policy with training current security staff offers challenges with unions, political backing, and parental support and personnel physical and emotional limitations.

The following list of options will present option pros and cons that should be considered for future implementation. Each option will present a benefit factor but will also consider factors that present future operational or administrative constraints.

Option 1: No Change/Remain Status Quo

The first policy alternative is to do nothing. School security safety policy #5681 will not be amended, nor will a new security policy be adapted. If current policy is not amended then the security cost to the Board of Education will not increase and the current staff will remain in place.

However, leaving existing security measures will increase vulnerabilities to a mass shooting incident and does not improve in creating a target hardening affect discussed in Peterson (2002). This study focused on the efficacy of school administration to increase school safety. School leaders have historically understood the importance of providing students and staff with a safe learning environment to ensure that learning can effectively take place, and the need for safety in schools remains a primary concern for all public school stakeholders.

Option 2: Hire Full-Time/Part-Time and/or Retired Police Officers to function as SROs

The second option would institute a full time School Resource Officer (SRO). This officer would primarily focus on the safety of the school by providing a uniformed omnipresence that

has been proven to deter criminal activity (Trump, 1998). SROs have also been instrumental in reducing and preventing school violence (Kennedy, 2004). In addition, SROs have provided school administrators with additional resources in the widespread attempts to prevent and respond to potential acts of violence in the school setting (Trump, 2004). This asset may also serve as a vantage point to local law enforcement officers who share the same skill set and communication abilities in the event of a critical incident.

There are benefits in hiring part-time police officers; they are only employed during the calendar school year. The part-time officer will be expected to meet all state guidelines in training in order to be sworn in an official police capacity. This resource would function specifically with the calendar school year, and during times of winter recess, holidays, and/or summer vacations the resource would not be used. The part-time police officer has the advantage of sharing the same lawful power of a full-time police officer and will create a cost saving of about 35%. Schools will benefit additionally by the increased presence in and around the schools, improved police call response times, and a reduction in truancy. Thus, this will result in increased school community perceptions on school safety.

An additional option is the adaptation of armed retired police officers. Police officers retire with a benefits package including medical, dental, and prescription coverage which will minimize the additional cost of funding for the school district. This option allows the board to pay highly trained armed personnel to create a front line of defense for all public schools. Currently the Ridgefield School District has hired a company to provide security, becoming the first one in Clark County, WA to employ a private firm's armed guards. A contract with Phoenix Protective Corporation, a Spokane-based security consulting company, calls for at least two of its employees to patrol the district's three campuses for the remainder of the school year (The Columbian News, 2013).

Police officers acquire an extensive amount of training from years of experience. This experience could range from tactical responses to serious incidents or just simply using their verbal skill set to deescalate confrontations in minor incidents. According to Federal Law H.R. 218, a retired police officer may lawfully carry a concealed firearm nationally. This unique benefit will minimize the amount of training cost and added liability insurance cost associated with hiring newly armed civilian security personnel. Retired police officers also have the necessary training and skill set to develop and expand crime prevention efforts, and assist school staff in developing school policies that address crime prevention. In addition crime prevention may also be addressed by implementing procedural changes and amending old policies. By replacing the current security staff with armed retired police officers, the district will save 7% of its security budget. The cost saving of 7% percent amounts to over 100 thousand dollars a year. The saving may allow the district to hire additional security staff or create additional layers of security by installing new state-of-the-art surveillance cameras, special reinforced security doors, or panic alarms in classrooms.

However, hiring retired armed police officers may involve additional cost for liability insurance coverage. Retired police officers will also be subject to state firearm-carrying regulations that require officers to qualify yearly at an authorized shooting range, and currently restrictions limit magazine capacity for all firearms carried by licensed individuals to a maximum of 7 rounds. School districts will be faced with providing in-house training in order to provide a clear and concise direction for all newly hired personnel. Retired police officers are going to face the transition of becoming school security guards who do not possess the same police powers as

active police officers. The school district must take into account the civil and educational rights of all students, which must be preserved. The focus of creating a front line of defense for the school must become the primary objective for this category.

These options may vary in salary and benefit cost for the school district. A cost analyst revealed the medium salaries for full-time and part-time police officers. The results demonstrated that the medium cost for municipalities hiring a full-time police officer with paid benefits is approximately \$102,079.39, and the medium cost for part-time police officers is approximately \$51,450.65. Additionally, benefits paid for police officers increased the average salary by 40%. Retired police officers can be hired on an as-needed basis and will minimize additional cost of paid benefits. The average yearly cost would be approximately \$50,000.00 which includes the cost of liability insurance and workman's compensation that is required by the New York State Labor Law. In addition, to the cost factors, consideration must also be given to the population of parents and administrators that are against having an armed security presence in schools. This is a common feeling which is normally associated with negative perceptions of police.

Option 3: Train Current Security in Armed Aspects

The difference between option two and three is the ability for the school district in avoiding layoffs in a stagnant economy. This alternative offers the potential of retraining current Board of Education Security Staff in aspects of armed security. Additional benefits for this option involve maintaining security staff that is familiar with school policy, staff, students and procedures. Current security staffs often develop close ties to students, parents and staff that will create a comfort level and also a sense of confidence and security for all.

New York State requires all candidates for school safety security guards compete a NYS eight hour training course with an additional 16 hour on-the-job training within the first 90 days of employment. Because of such minimal training standards current Board of Education security staff may be faced with limitations and constraints that may range from academic, physical and emotional. Amending the current security policy may create physical and emotional challenges for current security staff. Current qualifications and experience limit exposure to armed conflicts. The physical demand of tactical qualifications may set limitations in some cases rendering the employee ineffective in critical incidents such as mass shootings. One of the most pressing concerns for this option is the guard's inability to meet the physical and psychological demands in the event of a critical incident. Additionally, current school security staff may have the inability to complete the physical and vigorous demands of armed conflict training. Often critical incidents create the fight or flight syndrome that will ultimately impact critical decision-making. These inabilities and inexperience will ultimately endanger the student body (Fick & Ana, 2007).

Option 4: Hire Licensed Mental Health Professionals

Programs such as mental health programs emphasize respectful and supportive communication between adults and youth as well as low tolerance for youth victimization. These factors demonstrate the need and importance of developing mental health counseling in schools. It is therefore imperative upon stakeholders to further analyze avenues that facilitate and initiate the healing process for troubled youth. Counseling provides troubled youth with the availability to be treated empathically and with measures of sensitivity. Creating a sense of value in youth can be achieved by developing opportunities for youth to develop and display personal areas of

competence, and providing a safe atmosphere that youth may freely function which enhances the likelihood that youth will thrive.

Stakeholders and Administrators will face challenges and legal constraints when adapting a policy of mental health counseling. Waivers will be required to be signed by parents or guardians of counselees. Each counselor will be required to possess a state issued license and a credentials allowing for such serves to rendered. Some stakeholders such as parents will be reluctant in allowing their children to be treated at school because of fear of labeling and/or social stigmatism.

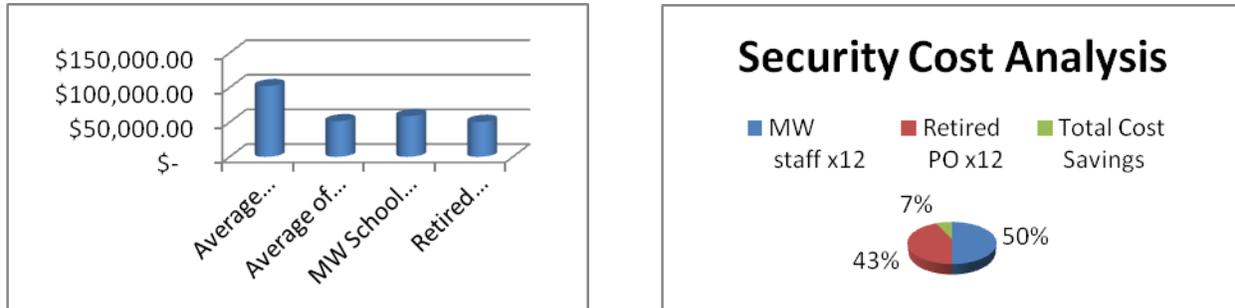
Options Assessment

The following assessment options were strategically selected after review of best practices in school organizations. Each option was carefully considered and considered with the stakeholders in mine. The stakeholder will ultimately influence the institution and adaptation of the following options.

Option Assessment

Vial Policy Options For School Safety	Option 1 No Action	Option 2 Adopt Armed Security	Option 3 Retrain Current Security in Armed Aspects	Option 4 Provide Mental Health Counseling for Troubled Teens
Description of Policy Change	No Change	Amend policy to allow armed SROs	Amend policy to allow current security to be armed	Amend policy to Adapt mental health counseling
Political Feasibility Maximum 20pt	No effect 0pt	Strong Backing 20pts	Mild backing 10pts	Strong backing 20pts
Administrative Feasibility Maximum 20pt	No Effect 0pt	Strong Backing 20pts	Mild Backing 15pts	Strong Backing 20pts
financial Feasibility Maximum 20pt	No Effect 20pt	Present Funds will facilitate change 15pts	Present Funds will facilitate change 15pts	Present Funds will facilitate change 10pts
Equity Maximum 20pt	No Effect 5pt	High 20pts	Medium 10pts	Low 15pts
Effectiveness Maximum 20pt	No Effect 0pt	Very Effective 20pts	Less Effective 15pts	Somewhat Effective 15pts
Summary Ranking	Total points 25 Ranking 4th	Total points 95 Ranking 1st	Total points 65 Ranking 3rd	Total points 80 Ranking 2nd

The following graph was instrumental in the option assessment graph in the financial feasibility category. The chart represents the median salaries for full-time and part-time police officers in the towns of Monroe, Chester, Tuxedo Park, and Woodbury, N.Y. The chart also shows the medium income for current Board of Education School Security Officers. The cost analysis revealed replacing current security staff with retired police Officers may save 7% from its annual security budget.



Above data collected via individual submissions to each municipality through the use of Freedom of Information Forms (FOIL).

Recommendation

Commitment in identifying concrete and comprehensive strategies to ensure the safety of every child, teacher, staff and visitors alike within schools becomes the responsibility of every stakeholder. The charge of creating a safer environment in schools now is dependent on the school district superintendant, School Board and political leaders in the community. Community leaders are presented with viable cost effective and efficient measures that will reduce or eliminate the possibilities of a mass shooting incident. The analysis strongly agree that implementing additional layers of security such as armed security will help to create a front line of defense: addressing mental health needs should also be collaborative efforts between schools, families, and communities.

Creating a front line of defense for schools can be accomplished by amending policy #5681 and adopting option 2: hiring retired armed police officers. This option not only allows the school district to take advantage of prior police experience but in addition the school district will also benefit from all previously acquired police training, tactical response and the experience of reacting and/or responding to critical incident. Additionally, this selection will also create a yearly cost savings of 7% and/or \$100,000.000 from the school safety budget. Hiring retired police officer will also save the school district the cost of medical benefits and future pension payment.

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