A Guide to Effective Collaboration between School Administrators and Police Working in Alberta’s Schools

Partners
PARTNERS
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Thank you to AASRO, Alberta Education and every officer, school administrator and student surveyed and interviewed, that made thoughtful, considered contributions to this resource. Their commitment and dedication to the children, youth, their families and the future of this province is commendable.
The report and the recommendations of the Alberta Task Force on Crime Reduction and Safe Communities (2007) and the Alberta Gang Reduction Report (December 6, 2010) indicate increasing concerns about school safety, crime reduction and violence prevention in Alberta schools and communities. As effective strategies for prevention, both recommend:

- the provision of mandatory, early on-going education for children and youth to build their skills and reduce the risk of gang, drug or crime involvement.
- access to school resource officers and school counselors.

Police and community schools working together in partnership model a belief that developing well-rounded, law abiding citizens leads to the creation of safer, healthier, stronger communities and involves the shared responsibility of all stakeholders. Partners: A Guide to Effective Collaboration Between School Administrators and Police Working in Schools is a new online resource intended to support and strengthen relationships between schools and police that work with schools as school resource officers, neighbourhood police officers or in crisis response. Partners seeks to increase mutual understanding of the complex roles and responsibilities police and school administration assume in community collaboration and provides an overview of best practices for community policing, collaborative practice, and communication. Common police procedures are clarified for all stakeholders. Links have been built to relevant sections of the Alberta School Act (see Appendix 1) for easy access. This publication is intended for informational purposes only and should not be construed in any way as legal advice. Readers should maintain/consult with local legal experts.

A review of Canadian literature on effective community policing and input from school administrators, police officers, and students has been essential in creating this document.

School administrators surveyed and interviewed for this resource rated the relationship they have with police supporting their school as being a highly valued partnership, generating obvious benefits to the entire community. All officers surveyed and interviewed indicated that working in schools was “the most rewarding” work that they had ever engaged in because of the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of children and youth on a daily basis.
Setting the Context for Police Working in Schools

The school environment provides an excellent opportunity for positive interaction with children and youth outside of traditional enforcement activities. These interactions can build relationships that have valuable preventative effects and a positive impact on community safety.

Schools typified as safe and caring are committed to preventing problems, fostering respect, fairness, equity, inclusion, and use school-wide efforts to build community. An emphasis is on handling incidents in a mature and reasoned manner, using interventions that repair harm, strengthening relationships and restoring a sense of belonging. All stakeholders teach, model and promote socially responsive behaviors, solve problems in peaceful ways and respect diversity and human rights.

Police officers working directly in schools are a key element of community policing that views the prevention, identification and resolution of crime as a shared responsibility of police and the community. The actions of police involve both proactive elements (e.g., crime prevention presentations, community education efforts, mentoring) and reactive responses (e.g., law enforcement, crisis response). The nature of the officers’ assignment (e.g., the number of schools they are assigned to) affects the balance between reactive and proactive strategies employed. Police officers in schools work collaboratively with all stakeholders (e.g., students, school administration, staff, parents and community) to prevent crime in the community and peacefully resolve local issues. Forging effective schools/police partnerships stems from the recognition that there is a strong relationship between feelings of safety and belonging and a student’s optimal ability to learn.¹

School administrators and students surveyed felt it was a direct benefit to the community when police officers developed a high degree of familiarity with the schools in the neighbourhoods they served. Getting involved in school and student activities was also frequently mentioned by school staff and students as a best practice. Engaging in fun activities with students was seen to develop a positive perception of police.

Objectives and Benefits of Police Working in Schools

• **Reduce school-related crime:**
  School related crime includes crimes that occur both on school property and in the surrounding community, that are attributable to persons or events associated with a given school. The work entails working proactively with youth with respect to gathering information and providing crime education. Police working in schools can detect problems and work with youth and all stakeholders to de-escalate and ideally resolve issues so that crime is ultimately prevented. Proactive police work facilitates better decision making by youth and fosters a greater awareness of what constitutes crime and the consequence of such actions.

• **Promote the partnership between schools and police working in schools as a valued collaboration and resource to the community:**
  Given a philosophy of community policing, police working in schools are not viewed as just law enforcers. They serve a myriad of roles including, but not limited to, mentor, role model, educator and source of information. As school communities build a relationship with police officers, all stakeholders are more likely to share information and develop mutual trust and respect.

¹ B.C. Ministry of Education: Safe, Caring and Orderly Schools Strategy
• Create a safer and more caring school environment:
  Youth, educators and the community need to believe that their school is a safe
  environment in which to work, learn and belong. It is expected that police working
  in schools will make meaningful contributions to creating a positive school culture
  and establishing a greater sense of school safety, in order to facilitate teaching and
  learning.

• Develop a positive perception of the police:
  Examples of this include:
  – enabling school communities to view police officers as caring people rather than
    just as authority figures; decreasing negative perceptions youth have of police;
  – allowing students to address concerns confidentially;
  – providing consistency by having the same police officer; officer has bonded with
    students and/or staff;
  – providing a positive role model of police officers and/or authority figures;
  – breaking down myths and stereotypes of police officers;
  – increasing accessibility of police officers;
  – acting as a neutral, supportive listener/confidant/someone to talk to.

• Promote the well-being and health of children and youth:
  Arguably promoting the well-being, health and safety of children and youth
  produces successful, productive adults, capable of making meaningful
  contributions to the health, safety and culture of their local communities and
  society in general.

• Improve community perception of youth:
  Increasing crime and disorder can perpetuate a fear of youth, particularly amongst
  seniors. Positively engaging children and youth in the community can positively
  impact this perception.

• Protect youth that are vulnerable to victimization and bullying:
  Give students skills to eliminate bullying.

• Serve as a role model/mentor to increase students’ developmental assets:
  Some youth pursue careers in criminal justice related work based on their
  experience with school-based police officers.

A Strength-Based Approach

“If we ask people to look for deficits, they will usually find them, and their view of the
situation will be colored by this. If we ask people to look for success, they will usually find
it, and their view of the situation will be colored by this.”

There is a growing momentum in organizations that serve communities to align
practice with a strength-based approach to relationship building and intervention.

Interest in strength-based practice as a way to enhance the positive development of
children and youth has increased significantly as practitioners, educators, researchers
and community care providers shift their attention from the prevention of specific
problems to a more positive, holistic view on youth development. Interventions have
moved increasingly toward creating a coordinated sequence of positive experiences
and providing key developmental supports and opportunities. Rather than the
traditional perspective of engaging a person with a problem orientation and risk
focus, a strength-based approach seeks to understand and develop the strengths and
capabilities that can transform the lives of people in positive ways.3

It is in the school setting that teachers, support staff and collaborating community
members have a significant opportunity to facilitate students’ academic achievement
and healthy social development in a safe, caring, respectful and supportive learning
environment.

A strength-based approach is a specific method of working with
children, youth, their families and the community, which emphasizes
young people and community, existing strengths, capabilities and
resources. A strength-based perspective involves a different way of
thinking about children and youth and interpreting their patterns of
coping with life’s challenges. A strength-based approach embraces the
philosophy that every individual, family, group and community holds
the keys to their own transformation. A strength-based intervention holds
the principles of social justice and inclusion, collaboration,
self determination, transparency, respect, sharing of resources and
regard for human rights. Students and individuals are seen as “having
potential” as opposed to being “at risk”.

A strength-based approach does not deny that children, youth and
families encounter problems and challenges in life. When students
and their families experience adversity, problems and issues are
acknowledged and validated. Strengths are identified and valued as
having a crucial role in problem solving.4

Embracing a strength-based philosophy encourages seeing beyond the risk
behaviors and characteristics of children, youth and their families to the potential
of what can be. It addresses the primary mandate of serving community and mental
health capacity building, with children, youth, and families taking ownership and
control of their own lives in healthy, meaningful and sustainable ways.

Strength-Based School Cultures:
- use a relationship-based approach and engage in significant community
  collaboration
- are comprised of professional learning communities in which all stakeholders
  are involved and have an equal voice in building a safe, peaceful, law abiding
  environment
- project a warm, caring, orderly school climate in which all adults are equally
  committed to student success
- involve the entire community by communicating regularly and soliciting input
  from all stakeholders
- use multi-disciplinary teams to address student and community needs
- take advantage of opportunities to educate
- use student, school and community strengths to shape student programming
- celebrate school and student accomplishments school-wide

Police are full participants in the process of building a strength-based culture.

3 Alvord & Grados, 2005; Barton, 2005; Benson, Leffert, Scales, & Blyth, 1998
4 McCaskey, 2008
Roles and Responsibilities

Community Policing

A key principle of community policing is that police and citizens share responsibility and are equally committed to reducing crime and improving the quality of life in local neighborhoods.

A traditional approach to policing tends to emphasize:

• The importance of an individual officer’s professional and compassionate treatment of all citizens, offering respect and dignity to the individual.
• An inter-related relationship with the communities they serve.
• A close association between police watch and fighting crime.

Community Policing:

• Augments and broadens the traditional roles and functions of the police.
• Believes that to create stronger, safer and healthier communities, involves the shared responsibilities of all stakeholders.
• Addresses problems at the community level.
• Involves partnerships and mentorships.
• Emphasizes thinking strategies and acting preventatively.
• Recognizes that fighting crime and enforcing the law are key roles and functions of police, but also acknowledges that non-enforcement tasks, based on building relationships, have an essential role as well.
• Fosters a closer rapport between community schools and the police, increasing the quantity and quality of police-community interactions and enhancing the capacity of the police to engage in problem solving partnerships.
• Empowers the community to take responsibility for their own community safety.

Roles and Responsibilities of Police Working in Schools

Roles

Police officers working in schools are expected to provide a uniformed, community-based, visible presence within the school community, to protect the safety and well-being of students, staff, parents and the community the school serves. Police officers working in schools are also expected to provide problem solving mediation, conflict resolution, public education and the enforcement of federal and provincial laws and municipal bylaws. Providing the best possible education for students in a safe school community is a shared responsibility, requiring a commitment to partnership, collaboration, cooperation and effective processes of communication.
There are six key roles for police working in schools: law enforcement, law related education, crime prevention, conflict resolution education, mentor, and advisor. How these roles are weighted depends on the nature of the officer’s assignment (e.g., how many schools the officer is expected to serve and the needs and conditions in the community). Some communities require universal, prevention-based duties, while others will require more focus or intensive protection and intervention.

Responsibilities

• Assist in providing a safe, caring and respectful environment for teaching and learning.
• Assist in the greater safety, protection and well being of students, parents, teachers and the community.
• Facilitate appropriate sharing and disclosure of information.
• Promote joint collaboration and partnership between school boards and police services in maintaining a safe school environment as a critical measure of success.
• Enforce the Criminal Code, the Youth Criminal Justice Act and all other federal, provincial and municipal legislation and related regulations.
• Assist in the development and understanding of good citizenship for children and youth.
• Promote and foster crime reduction and address the needs of victims and perpetrators.
• Provide information on the law and community safety issues.
• Divert young people away from crime in partnership with all stakeholders in the community.
• Work in partnership with other government and community-based organizations, to promote positive child and youth behavior.
• Ensure that best practices are shared with all stakeholders.
• Contribute to building a positive school climate.
• Encourage positive, healthy recreational activities for children and youth to build community.
• Inform the school as to how interviewing and investigations will be conducted and how information will be shared.
• Provide opportunities for school staff, students, parents and community to acquire skills, knowledge and attitudes to build a school environment that is characterized by effective processes for peaceful conflict resolution where conflict and individual differences, are treated with respect and dignity.
• Pursue alternatives to charges being laid.
• Effectively respond to incidents as they occur.
• Provide resource materials.
Definition of Youth

• The *Youth Criminal Justice Act*\(^5\) governs the application of criminal and correctional law to those 12 years of age or older, but younger than 18 at the time of committing the offence (Section 2). The *Criminal Code of Canada* (Section 13) states: "No person shall be convicted of an offence in respect of an act or omission on his or her part while the person was under the age of 12."\(^6\)

• The *Youth Criminal Justice Act* (Canada) is applicable with respect to any offence committed by a young person against the following statutes:
  1. The Criminal Code
  2. *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act*
  3. Any other federal statute or regulation

• The *Youth Justice Act* (Alberta) is applicable to all offenses that include:
  1. Provincial statutes and regulations
  2. Municipal by-laws

Incidents Involving Children 12 and Under

Police officers do have the authority to conduct interviews and report on this process with students that are 12 or under. With some exceptions, students in this bracket may have a fearful perception of the police. Given this perception, it is essential that the child has the right to choose a trusted adult with whom they have a relationship with to sit in on the interview. The principal or designate must sit in, but cannot assume that they are acting as an advocate or representative of the child. The right of choice belongs to the child. All adults involved must proceed with due respect for the dignity of the student involved. Relative anonymity of the child when reporting incidents is essential. Police officers are encouraged to take cues from adults sitting in as to how to approach the child, to build trust and the perception of safety. School administration and police officers share responsibility to notify parents/guardians as soon as possible. All school staff needs to be aware of their legal responsibility to report situations where the child may be at risk and in need of protection (e.g., suspected abuse, neglect, illegal activity).

Obligation to Report

Section 4(1) of the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act* states: “ANY PERSON who has reasonable and probable grounds to believe that a child is in need of intervention shall forthwith report the matter to a director.”

To make a report, contact a caseworker to your local Child and Family Services Authority (CFSA) or Delegated First Nation Agency (DFNA). If you do not know which office to contact, you can search for the local office at [http://www.child.aberta.ca/home/local_offices.cfm](http://www.child.aberta.ca/home/local_offices.cfm) on the Ministry’s public website. If you are unable to reach the local office or it is after business hours call the *Child Abuse Hotline* at: 1-800-387-5437.

If you are uncertain about whether to report, call and discuss the situation with a caseworker. The caseworker will determine, in consultation with a casework supervisor, whether more information needs to be gathered and if an assessment
needs to occur. It is not up to you to determine whether your observations are sufficient evidence for an assessment.

The legal obligation to report is not fulfilled unless the report is made directly to a delegated caseworker who works for a CFSA or DFNA. This must occur even if it is known that a child intervention agency is already involved. Anyone failing to report suspected child abuse while having “reasonable and probable grounds to believe a child is in need of intervention” is guilty of an offence and liable to a fine of not more than $2,000. The *Child, Youth and Enhancement Act* also states that the duty to report child abuse overrides any right of confidentiality or privilege a person may claim. The exception is the privileged relationship between lawyers and their clients.

**Police Protocols**

As pertains to all police protocols, if administrators are in a situation where a judgement call is required, establishing and maintaining contact with local district support networks remains essential.

**Administering a Caution**

Due to the possibility of statements being given by a young person upon their arrest, members are advised to inform the students of their rights and caution them immediately. The standard police caution is insufficient for this purpose due to the requirements of Section 146 of the *Youth Criminal Justice Act* (Canada). That section requires a caution to be given in a language appropriate to the young person’s age and understanding. This caution must also contain reference to the following six points:

1. That there is no obligation to give a statement.
2. That any statement given by the young person may be used in proceedings against them.
3. That the young person may consult with counsel, a parent or another responsible adult of their choice before giving a statement, or
4. That the young person’s statement must be given in the presence of the person chosen as counsel, unless the student otherwise desires and waives the right in writing.
5. That the young person must understand the circumstances of both automatic transfer to adult court and discretionary transfer to adult court.
6. That the young person understands the waiver of rights to speak to an adult or counsel.

A sound knowledge of the *Youth Criminal Justice Act* is imperative to the School Resource Officer so that they may competently deal with an issue.

**Student Searches**

The Supreme Court of Canada issued a decision in *R. v. M.R.M.* (April 25, 1998) that clarifies the law relating to student searches.

The Supreme Court of Canada summarized searches by school authorities as follows:

1. School authorities do not require a warrant or police assistance to conduct a search
on school property. School Authorities do not have to advise a student of any legal “rights” prior to a search.

2. The school authority must have reasonable grounds to believe that there has been a breach of school regulations or discipline and that a search of the student will reveal evidence of that breach. Searches cannot be random, blanket or arbitrary.

3. School authorities are in the best position to assess information given to them and relate it to the situation existing in their school.

4. The following may constitute reasonable grounds for a search of a student:
   information received from one student or more considered to be credible, the school administrator or teachers’ own observations, any combination of these pieces of information provided the source is deemed credible by the relevant school authority. The compelling nature of the information and the credibility of the source or sources must be assessed by the school administrator taking into account the context of their school.

5. The search itself must take place in a reasonable manner and must be minimally intrusive to the learning environment.

6. If the school authority believes the student is carrying a weapon, the Supreme Court has stated that it would be reasonable for the school authority “to take immediate action and undertake whatever search is required”.

Although Supreme Court of Canada rulings refer to a teacher’s authority to conduct a student search, this is a task better left to administrators, except in situation where there is peril to school and student safety and no administrator is in proximity.

If police are present when a search is done but the school authority conducts the search and the search was not requested by the police, the evidence may be used in a subsequent criminal prosecution even though the school authority did not read the student his/her rights. This is not the case if the police conduct or direct the search.

Recent rulings of the Supreme Court of Canada indicate that there is a lessened expectation of privacy to a school locker, particularly when schools assign lockers on a contractual basis.

**Interviewing Students**

*Common policy is as follows:*

1. No person, except the legal guardian of the student or law enforcement officers, shall be permitted to interview a student on school premises. Under some circumstances, Human Services authorities may interview students.

2. Police officers, in the course of their duties, may find it necessary to visit a school and interview certain students. The following procedures are to be used:

   a) When a police officer finds it necessary to interview a student during school hours, the police officer will report to the office of the principal or his/her designate and make known the purpose of the visit.

   b) The police officer is responsible to inform the student(s) that:
      – The student(s) are under no obligation to give a statement.
      – Any statement given by a student(s) may be used in proceedings against them.
– The student(s) have the right to consult with:
  - Counsel or a parent, or
  - In the absence of a parent, then an adult relative, or
  - In the absence of a parent and adult relative, any appropriate adult
    (over 18 years of age) of their choice.

– Any statement made by the student(s) must be made in the presence of the
  person consulted unless they expressly waive that right in writing.

c) In the absence of the parent, the principal or designate must sit in on interviews
   where the student(s) is under the age of 12 years. The principal or designate
   does not have the automatic right to be present at interviews of student(s) over
   12 years of age. The principal or designate cannot assume or state that they
   are the student’s representative/advocate in the interview; selection of person/
   counsel is the student’s right.

d) If the student(s) requests the principal or designate to be present during the
   interview, it is desirable that the person complies in loco parentis. However, the
   staff is not obligated. Therefore, if the request is refused, the student(s) may
   select some other adult to be present.

e) The principal or designate can request to “sit in” on an interview, as a silent
   observer. The police officer would then be responsible to inform the student(s)
   of this request. If the student(s) does not consent, then the principal or
   designate may then determine:
   – to let the interview go ahead without the principal or designate in attendance,
     or;
   – request that the interview be removed from the school premises.

f) Before removing the student(s) from the school, the police officer should
   communicate by telephone with the parent and inform them of the course of
   action.

g) Relationships between police working in schools and school staff and school
   administration are highly valued. In order to maintain positive relationships,
   police officers are committed to keeping the school administration well
   informed, and in compliance with the wishes of the principal or designates,
   provided that these wishes meet legal and regulatory requirements.

**Threat Risk Assessments**

“Threat assessment protocol is best implemented when multidisciplinary threat
assessment teams (school principals, police, therapists, counselors, social workers,
physicians, et al) are trained together. Collaboration between disciplines is essential to
assess and intervene on behalf of students, schools and communities in a useful way.

Threat assessment seeks to make an informed judgment on two questions: How
credible and serious is the threat itself and to what extent does the person(s) making
the threat appear to have the resources, intent, and motivation to carry out the
threat.”

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7 Voice on Harassment; B.C.
Student Voice, 2001 (Pg. 13);
Safe, Caring and Orderly
Schools: A Guide (Pg. 10)
Escorting a Student out of the School

When it is necessary to arrest a student or escort them out of the school, police officers should conduct this process as discreetly as possible so as to minimize attention, respect the student’s dignity, maintain good relationships with other students and not unduly disrupt the atmosphere of learning. The police officer should inform parents immediately when an incident occurs in the community as this is a shared responsibility. When incidents occur off school property, the police officer will escort the student(s) back to the school and call the parents/guardians to pick the student up. An arrest can result in the issuance of a summons to appear.

School Emergency and Crisis Response Plans

Most Alberta school boards have policies that direct schools to develop and communicate an emergency and crisis response plan spelling out procedures for schools on community related incidents such as lockdowns, evacuation plans, bomb threats and threat assessments. Each school tailors their emergency response plan to meet individual needs. These plans are a collaborative effort involving students, staff, parents and other agencies working regularly in the school and must be clearly communicated to all stakeholders annually. Police working in schools should have their involvement specified in the school emergency plans and take part in a regular review of these procedures.

Fire Drills: Schools are mandated to conduct drills each school year and on as needed basis. Everyone is expected to vacate the building and go to assigned areas out of the school. Attendance counts must be taken. Procedures for fire drills are spelled out in the school’s emergency and crisis response plans.

Lockdown Drills/Lockdowns: A lockdown is when everyone in the school is secured behind locked doors in response to a threat or perceived threat such as: an intruder inside the school; an environmental threat or criminal behavior in the immediate community. A minimum of two lockdown practice drills per school year are recommended. These drills are pre-arranged in correlation with the police assigned to the school, district security and the school itself. Again, procedures in a school’s emergency and crisis response plans should be observed.

Bomb Threats Evacuation: Follow procedures as specified in the individual school emergency response plan and recommended unit response to such threats.
Communication and Collaboration

Collaboration

Collaboration is: (see Appendix 2)

• An intersection of shared goals. Professionals engage in a common vision, or agreed upon outcomes.
• Shared knowledge, learning resources, learning and skills.
• A power balance in relationships. Relationships are founded in knowledge, not power.
• Obtaining greater resources, recognition and rewards and enhancing the quality of education.
• Something that requires strong leadership.
• Frequent communication and contact.
• All stakeholders are accountable to each other.
• Dependent on collective wisdom.

What can sabotage effective collaboration:

• Lack of a shared vision and clear, mutually established goals.
• Failure to build strong relationships between all stakeholders.
• Poor communication. No protocol or established schedules for frequent contact and communication.
• Lack of involvement of the administration, the community, and community serving officers.
• Inability to operate as a team; e.g., all stakeholders do not have an equal voice in shaping the partnership. Power is inappropriately distributed. Ego intervenes and creates power imbalances.
• No process in place to resolve disputes and disagreements.

Communication Processes and Practices

School administrators and police officers surveyed for this resource rated an open, fluid line of communication between all stakeholders, as an essential element of success. Successful school/police partnerships reflected frequent contact and communication and the significant involvement of the school administration team. Suggested best practices for police/school communication are as follows:

• Establish a close connection between police working in schools, school administration, and school staff. Meet regularly, particularly at the beginning of
the school year, to determine shared priorities, expectations and goals and at year end, to discuss results and future implications (see Appendix 3). The schedule for meeting regularly should be determined at the initial meeting. Monthly calendars should be shared.

- Utilize established communication vehicles at the school. Attending staff, parent and student council meetings facilitates the partner relationship.

- In the case of incidents at the school or in the community, police working in schools should serve as a liaison between the school and responding units, given that they have better knowledge of the school and a direct communication link to school administration.

- Facilitate communication and cooperation with school administrators, other police, Children's Services and other agencies serving student and community needs.  

- Increase the visibility and accessibility of caring adults and communicate with students on a personal level.

- Most school boards in Alberta have policies that relate to police interviews of young people. When there is a need to interview a young person, it is essential for the police officer to work in partnership with the school administration, who may have already established a relationship with the student and respect the process. At times, students will be removed from the school to be interviewed.

- The police officer’s role is complex in that they must provide full consideration to the law and protection of the school and community, but also must respect the rights and needs of students. Anonymity is a big issue for students reporting incidents to police and school administration. Receiving information concerning the activities and actions of other students should be dealt with in a professional, confidential manner that does not jeopardize the integrity of the student reporting.

- Communicate to students the important role they play in making the school and community a better place to be.

- Serve as peacekeepers and individual peer support.
Sharing Information

“The greatest power police have is the power of their discretion.”

The sharing of information is sometimes a delicate issue that can lead to misunderstanding between police and the school administration. Police officers are at liberty to share all information pertinent to the safety of the school and its students, regardless of when incidents occur. They cannot share information about incidents in the community and/or involving students, that occur during evening hours, or on the weekend, unless judged relevant to school and student safety.

Disclosure of personal information:

Section 40 (1) A public body may disclose personal information only
(q) to a public body or a law enforcement agency in Canada to assist in an investigation
   (i) undertaken with a view to a law enforcement proceeding, or
   (ii) from which a law enforcement proceeding is likely to result.

Tips for Effective Collaboration between School Administrators and Police Working in Schools

• Demonstrate mutual respect for each other’s time.
• Meet weekly or more based on the circumstances to exchange information about the safety of the school, students, staff, parents and community.
• Establish meetings at the beginning of each school year to clarify roles and responsibilities, expectations and specific school and community needs.
• Meet at year end to measure results and discuss the school’s needs for the next school year.
• Understand the dynamics and issues the school is facing, e.g., drug activity, potential gang association, students at risk, ethno/cultural demographics and near by hang outs.
• Have the role of the police officer specified in the school’s emergency and crisis response plan and the school’s student code of conduct.
• Understand each other’s rights and role limitations.
• Build in communication processes that keep school administration and police working in schools informed.
• Develop relationships with students and staff and become a visible presence and integral part of the school culture.
• Make it easy to report safety issues.
Full Continuum for School / Police Working in Schools Prevention / Intervention Strategies

- **Intensive**
  - Externals: One-on-one mentorship, crisis response, threat/risk assessment, arrest, return from suspension, expulsion.

- **Selected / Targeted**
  - Examples: Restorative justice measures, for instance community conferencing; one-on-one and small group mentorship; participating on multi-disciplinary teams to address student and family needs and community issues; in-class educational presentations; acting as a liaison with other agencies.

- **Universal**
  - Examples: Promoting peace in the school and community; starting young to educate students to respect the law and positively contribute to their community; becoming an integral part of the school culture; relationship building with all stakeholders; participating in school-wide activities including staff, student and parent council meetings; acting as a source of information on the law and student related issues; setting high expectation and reinforcing acceptable conduct; connecting with parents/guardians; working with student leadership; keeping the school and students informed regarding legal rights, school safety issues and community supports; promoting high school completion.

Percentages reflect recommended time that should be devoted to these strategies.

Investing in social universal prevention supports has proven to reduce the need for selected targeted, and intensive interventions and provides the foundation for proactive policing.
Best Practices

Best Practices with Students as Recommended by Students

• Communicate openly with students.
• Get involved in student activities.
• Let students know you are listening and care about their concerns.
• Take action on these concerns.
• Treat all students equally.
• Be a visible presence in the school and talk to students on a personal level.
• Enforce the law and school rules consistently.
• Provide a model of acceptance.
• Be approachable.
• Recognize students for their talents, deeds and achievements.
• Inform parents of the law, rules and any concerns at school.
• Create a comfortable, positive school/learning environment for students.

Mentoring of Children and Youth

In keeping with the literature on asset building and its impact on developing resilient human beings, students interviewed for this resource rated relationships with caring adults as potentially life changing. Students rated these relationships as the number one support in successfully navigating life’s challenges and crises to become successful adults and citizens. All stakeholders rated having fun together as a powerful strategy to initiate and sustain relationships and engage large numbers of students.

The Alberta Mentoring Project (2008 and ongoing) defines mentoring as the presence of caring individuals who provide children and youth with support, advice, reinforcement and constructive role modeling over time. Mentorship empowers students to successfully complete their high school education. Mentorship empowers students to successfully complete their high school education. Mentorship plays a significant role in helping children and youth thrive and develop resilience. Research is clear that the development of a transformative school culture is relationship-based, sets realistic, but high expectations, shares power and supports students to pursue high school completion. Police working in schools have the opportunity to be powerful, positive role models and mentors. Even arrests can proceed more smoothly and prove to be a better learning experience, if the officer has a relationship with students.

Schools need to develop caring relationships between all members of the school community: students, school administration, all staff, parents, community and police working in schools. Mentoring genuinely supports teachers and school administration in their challenging, multi-faceted roles and responsibilities.

11 http://albertamentors.ca/
Effective, successful mentoring involves:

• Engaging in ways that allow you to become very knowledgeable about the clientele you work with, coming to an understanding of student and school strengths, culture, important relationships, goals, dreams, resources and limitations.

• Setting high, but realistic expectations for students, communicating them clearly to the school, its students and the community and supporting students in achieving them.

• Encouraging student input, involvement and leadership, by expressing confidence in student abilities and modeling the same excellence expected of students.

• Supporting high school completion and making students aware of the doors education can open.

• Using the same strategies as a good coach (e.g., constructive feedback, encouragement, vision, expressing a personal interest, etc.). Participating in physical activities together.

• Being dependable, youth-centered, morally conscious and encouraging.

• Taking advantage of formal and informal mentoring opportunities. At a recent meeting of school resource officers in Edmonton, for example, police stayed behind afterwards to play volleyball with the students. Engaging in activities with students and staff sends a strong message to the community and has major sway with students. It is important to recognize and acknowledge the value of the many informal mentoring relationships that exist in schools across Alberta. Informal mentoring allows for students to make positive connections, build strong relationships and become resilient human beings.

Best Practices for Partnering Between Schools and Police Services

The roles of police working in schools are shaped by the expectations, needs and attitudes of the school administration, staff and students in a given school. As a result, police working in schools may differ considerably in the amount of time they can allot to tasks such as in-class presentations and one-on-one interactions.

Successful collaborations between schools and police working in schools have determined that the attributes of success are as follows:

• Recognize that schools are professional learning communities where all students and adults working in the building are valued members of the culture.

• Involve collaboration – different sectors and partners work together (including schools, social services, health, labour, police and criminal justice, community groups, the private sector, etc.) to tackle the many risk factors involved.

• All stakeholders in the school (including school administration, police, school staff, students, parents and community) contribute to a wraparound philosophy of care practices. A wraparound philosophy of care provides family and community support at every stage of the child’s development.

• Promote a sense of peace in the community, e.g., recently, peace officers attended the anti-bullying graduation of students in a neighborhood elementary school. Their presence at the graduation provided a strong message to the community, that bullying will not be tolerated in the school or in the community.
• Understand the dynamics and issues the school is facing, e.g., drug activity, potential gang association, students at risk, ethno/cultural demographics and nearby hang outs.

• Communicate and regularly reinforce acceptable conduct. Clearly define and communicate unacceptable conduct for students. Ensure that consequences for inappropriate behavior are reasonable, related to the offense and followed through consistently.

• Express an absolute belief that every student has potential, e.g., many police departments in Alberta practice “positive ticketing”, e.g., catching students in the act of doing good and reinforcing acceptable conduct with positive consequences. A positive phone call or email home, by school administration and/or police working in schools, has power with students, parents/guardians and the community.

• Support a school climate characterized by mutual respect and shared responsibility. Become an integral part of the school culture.

• Have a mutual expectation that all adults working in schools use a relationship-based approach to dealing with students. Positive change occurs in the context of authentic relationships, e.g., bike patrol officers made a habit of dropping by elementary schools in their assigned neighborhood to play, interact, and build relationships with students and staff.

• Involve parents or significant relationships in the student’s social network, e.g., attending school-wide spirit events contributes to a safe and caring climate. Parents/guardians are also to be informed as soon as possible, following any incident involving police.

• All stakeholders respond consistently to incidents in a fair and reasoned manner, using interventions that focus on repairing harm, strengthening relationships and restoring a sense of belonging.

• Establish a close connection between police working in schools, school staff and school administration. Meet regularly, particularly at the beginning of each school year to determine shared priorities and practices and at the end of the school year to assess results and future implications (see Appendix 3). The schedule for meeting regularly can be determined at the initial meeting. Successful collaborations have a well-established plan for communication (see section on Communications, pages 16 / 17).

• Foster school/community collaboration to help coordinate services needed by children, youth and their families. Students may require the support of schools, family, the legal system, and community, working in collaborative ways.

• Create a balance between the proactive and reactive role of police officers serving in schools.

• Mutually participate in crime prevention activities, including identification of school safety issues and the creation and implementation of programs, activities and resources, to address those issues.

• Provide information and education on the Criminal Justice System and issues of importance to students (bullying, rights, personal safety, etc.) and staff.
Facilitate communication and cooperation with school administration, other police officers, courts, Human Services and other agencies serving student and community needs.

Respond quickly and effectively to report unsafe conditions or illegal actions. Make reporting easy and free of retribution.

Engage in fun-based school and student activities. Use humor where appropriate, to defuse possible incidents.

Provide ongoing professional development and access to appropriate resources for police officers working in schools and school staff. Officers should be encouraged to attend staff and Parent Council meetings if at all possible.

Clearly establish the role of police in the school-wide emergency and crisis response plan. Conduct threat and risk assessment collaboratively.

Clarify roles, responsibilities and timeliness of informing parents/guardians.

Utilize student leaders and solicit student input. Build students’ capacity to lead positively. Students should be involved in a process of naming the values and principles to live by within the school community.

Increase the visibility and availability of safe and caring adults.

Clarify the process of sharing information between the police and the school administration.

Utilize restorative justice intervention practices (See Restorative Justice Measures Section, Page 24).

Expand the use of multi-disciplinary teams to address community issues.

Extra curricular activities build ties to the community. Students are encouraged to give back to the community in which they live, e.g., administrators at a very challenging, diverse junior high school have their students shovel the walks of neighborhood seniors and leave a note saying “You have just been kissed by a Killarney Snow Angel”. Attitudes towards the school in the community have been impacted very positively.

Suspensions/Expulsions

Suspensions are authorized under section 24 of the School Act. When suspensions happen, a plan is needed to reintegrate the suspended student back into the school community upon return. The student must accept ownership of the behavior and strike a plan for positive change.

Police working in schools should sit on a multi-disciplinary team to assist and support the student in making a successful return to school.

Expulsions are authorized under section 25 of the School Act. If the student has been expelled from a school, police working in schools can be an essential liaison in determining alternate placement for the student by providing a link to the receiving school.
Restorative Justice Measures

“The secret of education lies in respecting the pupil”\(^\text{12}\)

The peaceable schools movement recognizes that education is for and by the community. The same can be said about law enforcement and justice. Howard Zehr in the “Little Book of Restorative Justice” defines restorative justice as “… a process to involve, to the extent possible, those who have a stake in a specific offense and to collectively identify and address harms, needs and obligations, in order to heal and put things as right as possible.” Restorative practice assists offenders to deal with the harm they have caused to others and the school community as a whole.

“Key goals of restorative measures:

- to understand the harm and develop empathy for both the harmed and the harmer;
- to listen and respond to the needs of the person harmed and the person who harmed;
- to encourage accountability and responsibility through personal reflection within a collaborative planning process;
- to reintegrate the harmer (and if necessary the harmed) into the community as valuable, contributing members;
- to create caring climates to support healthy communities”\(^\text{13}\);
- to empower the community to create outcomes for community safety and peace.

Restorative measures do not negate the impact of consequences for unacceptable behavior. The goal is to have offenders understand the real harm done by their actions, to take responsibility and ownership for the behavior and to commit to positive change.

Restorative practices acknowledge that relationships are central to building communities and seek to mend relationships when they are damaged or broken.

“Guiding questions for a restorative approach:

1. Who has been hurt?
2. What are their needs to make it right?
3. Whose obligations are they?
4. What are the causes?
5. Who has a stake in this? (victims, offender, community members, family, etc.)
6. What is the right process to involve all stakeholders to put things right”\(^\text{14}\)

Restorative Processes:

- recognize the goal and purpose of the offending behavior;
- are intended to address the needs of the harmed;
- work to heal, put things right and improve the future;
- use collaborative processes.
Conclusion

The Alberta Task Force on Crime Reduction and Safe Communities Report; Results and Recommendations states:

“Preventing crime and improving safety isn’t something government or the courts or the police can do alone, nor will it happen overnight. Albertans need to take responsibility at all levels. This is about individuals, families and communities stepping up and recognizing that many of the factors that contribute to crime are within their own hands.”

“The responsibility for reducing crime and making Alberta a safer place belongs to all of us. In our individual and family lives, in our businesses, workplaces, schools and communities, there are steps we can all take to tackle crime and keep our communities safe. Albertans, and especially our children, deserve nothing less.”
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23. The 11 Principles of Collaboration:
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Appendix 1

Excerpts from the School Act (May 2011)

The following excerpts from the School Act pertain to the work of police in schools. Readers are advised to access the most current version of the School Act on the Alberta Education website. http://education.alberta.ca/department/policy/legislation/regulations.asp

Responsibility to Students

45. (8) A board shall ensure that each student enrolled in a school operated by the board is provided with a safe and caring environment that fosters and maintains respectful and responsible behaviors.

Students

12. A student shall conduct himself or herself so as to reasonably comply with the following code of conduct:
   (a) be diligent in pursuing the student’s studies;
   (b) attend school regularly and punctually;
   (c) co-operate fully with everyone authorized by the board to provide education programs and other services;
   (d) comply with the rules of the school;
   (e) account to the student’s teachers for the student’s conduct;
   (f) respect the rights of others.

Principals

20. A principal of a school must:
   (f) maintain order and discipline in the school and on the school grounds and during activities sponsored or approved by the board;
   (g) promote co-operation between the school and the community that it serves;

Teachers

18. A teacher while providing instruction or supervision must:
   (f) maintain, under the direction of the principal, order and discipline among the students while they are in the school or on the school grounds and while they are attending or participating in activities sponsored or approved by the board;
Liability for damage to property by student

16. (1) If property of a board is destroyed, damaged, lost or converted by the intentional or negligent act
   (a) of one student, the student and the student’s parent are jointly and severally liable to the board in respect of the act of the student, or
   (b) of 2 or more students acting together, the students and their parents are jointly and severally liable to the board in respect of the act of the students.

Suspension

24. (1) A teacher or a principal may suspend a student in accordance with subsection (2) or (3) if in the opinion of the teacher or principal
   (a) the student has failed to comply with section 12, or
   (b) the student’s conduct is injurious to the physical or mental well-being of others in the school.

   (2) A teacher may suspend a student from one class period.

   (3) A principal may suspend a student
      (a) from school,
      (b) from one or more class periods, courses or education programs, or
      (c) from riding in a school bus.

   (4) A principal may reinstate a student suspended under subsection (2) or (3).

   (5) When a student is suspended under subsection (3), the principal shall
      (a) forthwith inform the student’s parent of the suspension,
      (b) report in writing to the student’s parent all the circumstances respecting the suspension, and
      (c) if requested, provide an opportunity to meet with the student’s parent, and the student if the student is 16 years of age or older, to discuss the reasonableness of the suspension.

   (6) If the student is not to be reinstated within 5 school days after the date of the suspension, the principal shall
      (a) forthwith inform the board of the suspension, and
      (b) report in writing to the board all the circumstances respecting the suspension and the principal’s recommendations, and the student remains suspended until the board has made a decision under subsection (8).

   (7) The principal may recommend that the board expel the student if
      (a) the student has displayed an attitude of wilful, blatant and repeated refusal to comply with section 12, or
      (b) the student’s conduct is injurious to the physical or mental well-being of others in the school.

   (8) The board shall within 10 school days after the date of the suspension
      (a) reinstate the student, or
      (b) expel the student from school in accordance with section 25.
(9) Before the board makes a decision under subsection (8), the student and the student’s parent may make representations to the board with respect to the principal’s recommendation to expel the student.

**Expulsion**

25. (1) On considering the report provided to it under section 24(6)(b) and any representations made to it under section 24(9), the board may expel the student if:
   (a) the principal has recommended that the board expel the student, and
   (b) the student has been offered another education program by the board.

(2) An expulsion must be for a period of more than 10 school days.

(3) When a student is expelled under this section, the board shall forthwith notify, in writing, the student’s parent, and the student if the student is 16 years of age or older,
   (a) of the expulsion, and
   (b) of the right to request a review under section 124.

(4) The board may re-enrol a student who has been expelled.

**Prohibited Activities**

27. (1) No person shall:
   (a) disturb or interrupt the proceedings of a school,
   (b) disturb or interrupt the proceedings of a school meeting or board meeting, or
   (c) loiter or trespass in a school building or on property owned by a board.

The following sections provide further direction on the issues of:

- Compulsory Education – Section 13
- Enforcing School Attendance - Section 14
- Attendance - Section 15
Appendix 2

Wraparound Principles of Collaboration

education.alberta.ca/collaborativepractices

The Government of Alberta has engaged a wide-range of Albertans in an unprecedented discussion about the future of education. The conversations have been important to develop a vision for the next 20 years of education in Alberta.

Key themes have emerged including the concepts of collaboration and capacity building. These concepts are especially important to describe the work of wraparound, a term that is commonly used to describe many of the promising collaborative practices that support a culture where children and youth are equipped to overcome challenges and experience success.

Alberta’s Approach to Collaborative Practices

Collaboration is a process for setting collective priorities, and incorporating different perspectives. This is reflected in the way people commit to working together to meet their shared goals. It allows for the blending of perspectives, expertise, resources and shared accountability and responsibility.

Shared Leadership is evident in schools where administrators model the value of collective wisdom. Where school staff, focus on developing meaningful relationships within the school and community, partnerships and collaboration naturally emerge. We see the collective benefits for our children, youth and their families by capitalizing on the strengths and experiences of all involved.

Team based involves a group of people, including the family members, who work collaboratively toward the success of the child or youth and their family, through informal or formal supports and services. Team based ensures the supports and services are consistently and effectively implemented, managed and measured.

School-community linked means working collaboratively to promote and strengthen partnerships by eliminating barriers between the school and community. These strategies take place in the most inclusive, most responsive and most accessible settings to enhance the child or youth and family’s school, home and community life.
**Persistent** means not giving up on, blaming or rejecting children, youth or their families. When faced with challenges or setbacks, everyone continues working toward meeting the needs of the youth and their family, and achieving the goals identified until it is determined that formal coordination of the supports and services are no longer necessary.

**Family voice and choice** ensures child or youth and family perspectives are intentionally elicited, prioritized and actioned as part of a collaborative wraparound practice. Planning is grounded in family members’ perspectives. The individuals involved in the process strive to provide options and choices that reflect the family values and preferences.

**Culturally responsive** practices respect and build upon the values, preferences, beliefs, cultural context, and identity of the child or youth, family and community. The team recognizes these unique attributes as sources of great strength.

**Natural supports** are individuals drawn from family members’ network of personal and community relationships. These individuals are intentionally sought out and encouraged to become full participants in supporting the child or youth and their family.

**Individualized** means a customized set of strategies, supports and services are developed to support the goals identified for the child or youth and their family.

**Strength based** practices build on a child or youth’s capabilities, knowledge, skills, and assets, to help them develop the resiliency needed to overcome challenges.

**Data informed** goals and strategies are used to support the child or youth and their family. They are observable, measurable and can be used as indicators of success, to monitor progress and revise supports and services accordingly.


For additional information, please contact:
Alberta Education – Cross-Ministry Services Branch
44 Capital Boulevard, 10044 - 108 Street, Edmonton, Alberta T5J 5E6
Phone: 780 422 5045, toll-free by first dialing 310-0000.
Deaf callers (with TTY equipment) 780-427-9999 in Edmonton or 1-800-232-7215 in other Alberta locations.
Appendix 3

Template for Initial Meeting Between School Administrators and Police Working in Schools

• Share information about school culture, students’ strengths and needs, demographics, officer’s perception of his/her role at the school, community issues.

• Establish shared expectations, goals, roles and responsibilities

• Establish communication protocols, processes, frequency of contact, meeting schedule and shared calendars.

• Share school emergency and crisis response plan.

• Parent and community involvement at the school.

• Students “at risk” and/or related school issues.

Sample Agenda Items for Staff Meetings

• Update school activities for the month and upcoming events.

• Monthly highlights and possibly a student related story.

• Current safety issues at the school and shared efforts to address these issues.

• School emergency and crisis response plan and required staff and student behaviour.

• How police can proactively support students, staff and community.

• How students and staff can proactively support police.
For additional information, please contact:
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