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ED-RED Equity Ad Hoc Committee Work
Subcommittee on the Role of School Resource Officers

Equity Ad Hoc Committee Background: Over the summer, ED-RED created an Equity Ad Hoc Committee as a forum for ED-RED member school districts to discuss the work, both past and present, that ED-RED districts are doing to close the equity gap. The goal of this committee was to use this work as a foundation for developing policy recommendations for future legislative negotiations around closing the equity gap and ensuring equitable educational access and opportunity to lead to improved outcomes for students of color.

Given the overwhelming response of members (over 40 school board members and administrators) that signed up for the Equity Ad Hoc committee, the group was divided into four subcommittees. Those subcommittees are: 1) Student Discipline and SRO/Police Presence on School Grounds; 2) Data Reporting (Discipline and Arrest Data); 3) Curriculum; and 4) Increasing BIPOC Candidates/Hiring/Retention. These subcommittees were tasked with delving deeply into past legislative proposals intended to increase educational equity, access and opportunity for students of color in our schools and to develop Guiding Principles for moving those proposals forward.

Below is an overview of the legislative discussions that gave rise to the Subcommittee on the Role of School Resource Officers, as well as Guiding Principles and Recommendations to guide future negotiations on these issues.

Subcommittee on Student Discipline and School Resource Officers/Police Presence

Legislative Overview

Over the past several years, various legislation has passed which has helped clarify the role and responsibilities of SROs and police in school districts. Specifically:

- In 2015, P.A. 99-0456 (SB100) encouraged school districts to enter into Memoranda of Understanding to clearly define law enforcement's role in schools (though the language of P.A. 99-456 primarily focused on exclusionary discipline)
- In 2018, P.A. 100-0984 took an important step in ensuring that SROs receive appropriate training before working in schools.
- Most recently, in 2019, P.A. 101-0478 set forth specific requirements for parental notification when a student is detained or questioned by law enforcement on school grounds.

Following the horrific deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and so many other Black and African-American people at the hands of the police this past year, several of our Districts, found it critical to revisit the role of SROs and police in our schools and the Agreements with local law enforcement agencies governing that role.

Guiding Principles

- School Resource Officers can play multiple important roles in school districts including:
 - Serving as a critical resource to administrators when faced with criminal activity that threatens student safety (i.e. social media issues, sexual assault, student threats of violence, etc.);
 - Establishing positive supportive relationships with students and families;
 - Conducting home visits as needed (particularly where safety concerns exist creating an obstacle for administrators to conduct such a visit);
 - Promote a strong partnership between the school and police department; and
 - In some instances, teaching school coursework.
- Member district school principals overwhelmingly report strong support for their SROs and the positive work they do with students and in keeping the school community safe.
- Not all school districts share boundaries with a single municipality, resulting in school districts having to navigate relationships with multiple police departments.
- Member school districts have taken steps to ensure that SROs receive school-specific training (including equity training) provided to faculty and staff above and beyond the training their own police departments may require of them.
- School districts have liability considerations and may open themselves up to legal exposure if they fail to ensure the safety of the school community.

Recommendations

- Local communities should determine whether to use a SRO program at their schools, as well as define the roles and limits of the SROs, depending on the needs of their local communities, in a written agreement that covers, at a minimum, the goals and objectives of the SRO program, as well as the roles and responsibilities of school personnel and the SRO; how the SRO will be selected; supervision of the SRO, how the School District will be involved in any complaints made against the SRO and how the SRO program will be regularly reviewed. This agreement should be annually reviewed.
- SRO duties should relate to the safety and security of the school community. SROs should not handle routine discipline incidents. Agreements should clearly define boundaries between school district administrators and SROs so that administrators understand the types of incidents in which SROs should be involved, as well as appropriate timing for that involvement.
- School Districts are responsible for what happens in their schools and should play a role in the initial selection of SROs, be made aware of complaints made against an SRO, and play a role in resolving those complaints.

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