WILL SCHOOLS AND POLICE BE ABLE TO IMPACT JUVENILE CRIME IN THE FUTURE?

Article

California Commission on
Peace Officer Standards and Training

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Command College Class 30
Sacramento, California

June 2001

30-0609

This Command College project is a FUTURES study of a particular emerging issue in law enforcement. Its purpose is NOT to predict the future, but rather to project a number of possible scenarios for strategic planning consideration.

Defining the future differs from analyzing the past because the future has not yet happened. In this project, useful alternatives have been formulated systematically so that the planner can respond to a range of possible future environments.

Managing the future means influencing the future, creating it, constraining it, adapting to it. A futures study points the way.

The views and conclusions expressed in the Command College project are those of the author and are not necessarily those of the Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST).

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Standards and Training

"Teach your children well, their father's hell, did slowly go by
and feed them on your dreams, the one they pick's
the one you'll know by... " [1]

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School Resource Officer, Paul Pederson heard the alarm first. The magnetometer had gone off again at the west entrance to the school. The detection devices had been in place for six months now, and officials had confiscated twenty-two weapons in that time. Pederson walked toward the group of students who were attracting the attention. The weapon, this time, was the ceremonial knife young James Patel was wearing in his Sikh turban. Security personnel were arguing with him as to his right to have this. Thus another day began for the lone SRO for the Tracy Unified School district. The problems began in November of 2001, with the passage of Proposition's 14 and 21. Proposition 14 restricted an increase in property taxes and allotments that went to schools. The urban sprawl that had grabbed the central valley of California, and the continued rise in housing costs, had created a backlash with the voters. Affordable housing had become a phrase of the 90's, but was totally non-existent in 2001. Proposition 21 was the voucher initiative that passed. Millions of dollars now were being diverted from public schools to fund the ever-growing numbers of home-schooled children. Funding for the public schools had dropped off dramatically. What was once thought to be a growing partnership between the police department and the school district was now a shell of the past. Grant funds were being diverted by the police department into crime prevention efforts surrounding the increased need to enforce the state mandated daytime curfew.

Growth in the area had continued to increase at an alarming rate. Pressure from the federal government to include more low income housing in the city's urban management plan had also created another set of problems for the community and the police department. Planning that was designed for medium and low-density residences now was becoming high-density multi-family dwellings. The residents were usually culturally diverse, often times non-English speaking. The police department was ill prepared for this influx into the community. School aged children seemed to be everywhere. Even those in city government wondered aloud, "What happened to our plan?" The political pressure was enormous to provide everyone, no matter what his or her social-economic base, with housing. This came at a great cost to both the schools and the police.

Pederson looked around and finally saw the Principal stick his head out of his office. It was as if he was playing the childhood game of hide-and-seek, looking to see if the coast was clear. Pederson motioned for him to meet him in the hall. This new principal was a real piece of work, thought Pederson to himself. The Superintendent had continued to complain about the ability to hire trained teachers, something the police department had been struggling with for years, but this guy was really the bottom of the barrel. Pederson just shook his head. "Glad this guy wasn't here last year when we had the shooting," he mumbled to himself.

The shooting incident, though not gaining the national attention others had in the past, was still fresh in everyone's mind. It's hard to forget the sight of a 14-year-old lying on the ground bleeding, knowing she was an innocent bystander. She had been standing listening to the anti-growth advocates that had been allowed on campus. They were there

to complain about inadequate facilities and lack of planning by the schools, the police, and the city. No one saw the gunman as he approached from the gymnasium doors. He fired three quick shots, hitting only the 14-year-old. No police were on campus at the time. The gunman fled, only to be arrested later.

There had been far too much time spent on trying to please various political groups with differing agendas. Everyone had an idea on how to fix the problem. Unfortunately, no one asked those who were immersed in the problem.

Pederson looked at the principal, as he timidly approached him in the hall and asked him, "When are we going to make a decision on a policy for these cultural issues such as this knife incident?" The principal blankly looked at him and with a squint and replied, "It's not my job to do that." That had become the greater problem: it was now no ones' concern or problem.

Pederson walked away slowly heading out to his car to make his rounds of the now 18 different schools. As he did this he glanced at the headlines in the Tracy Press and could only shake his head at what they blared out in bold print, "Major Earthquake Predicted for Central Valley." "Well at least it's not raining," he said to no one in particular.

This scenario is a look into the future and where mid sized police departments and schools could possibly be in the year 2006. It is offered as a method in which to look into the future and not only wonder out loud, but ponder the need to address the problems in schools today and not wait for the future. Even more importantly, how will this partnership impact tomorrow's youth in a society that is changing faster than ever before? The diversity in the areas of culture and values will have an impact on this partnership. In

1950, the state of California had 10 million residents, less than one third of today's 33 million. [2] The increase in ethnic and cultural diversity within the state eclipses that of many countries. The challenges this diversity and ever increasing population will put to bear the limits of both schools and police departments, the question is what do we do?

The Problem and its history

If the little red schoolhouse were still here today it would be bursting at the seams. The growth rate in California, especially in the area of school age children is being impacted by varied trends; the immigrant migration, and the change in work patterns and affordable housing. Areas that were once rural farming areas are now being developed as never seen before. These shifts in moving families are straining an already stretched public school system. The issues of immigration, poverty, and substandard work and living conditions for working families put tremendous pressure on all social services including police and schools.[3]

Population predictions demonstrate the west, especially California, to be the leader in school age growth rates. Between January 1995 and January 1999, California's population increased by 1.8 million. If the trend continues, California will reach 35 million by the end of 2000 and 40 million by 2010.[4] The largest portion of this projected growth will likely occur in the age group of 18 and under. By the year 2005, the number of California children will increase by 2.3 million.[5] Hispanics will account for 64.5 percent of the state's growth, Asian and Native Americans will account for the second largest share 24.6 percent, Caucasians, 6.4 percent and African Americans, 4.5 percent.[6]

As technology plays an ever-increasing role in our daily lives, so do the job market and the technology implications. As families strive to accomplish the American dream of

owning a home, they are rapidly facing the stark reality that very few can live where they work. This is caused by the technology based companies and their instant wealth. Families can no longer afford to live in areas such as the Silicon Valley in California. One example of the rising cost is the city of Atherton. With close proximity to technology-based business and as home to several dotcom-focused companies; the median price for a home is 2.5 million dollars.[7]

The rising population in areas where for years farming has become a way of life is being impacted by the migration to seek affordable housing. An example is the city of Tracy, California, long a farming based community. Tracy has seen a growth increase like never before. Since 1995, the city has averaged 950 building permits annually for new residential development. The average resident moving to Tracy is in a young middle class family, averaging 3.2 people per household.[8] This population increase is not lost on the school district. Assistant Superintendent Casey Goodall projects the increased population for the Tracy Unified School District will result in an additional 4,000 students by the year 2006. This will represent a yearly average increase of 3 percent as compared to the 1.3 percent average that was seen between 1990 and 1999.[9]

As California becomes more culturally diverse, the challenges that come with that diversity are represented in school age children. The drop out rate for high schools evidences an example of these challenges. In a report published in June 2000, by the National Center for Education Statistics, it was noted that Hispanics dropped out of high school nationally at a rate of 38 percent, white students dropped out at a rate of less than 10 percent and Asian at 3.2 percent.[10] Law enforcement is continually dealing with crime issues involving truancy. A sense of the impact of those crime related problems needs to

be gleaned from these groups of dropouts. The levels, in particular those of cultural diversity, are alarming. Both law enforcement and education need to ensure no student becomes disenfranchised, especially if the differences in culture are the leading cause.

Programs that are value and character based will become necessary as educators are asked to do more than just teach. As the migration of commuters continues to move away from the workplace because of housing costs, educators are being asked to take on more of a parenting role. As the commute time lengthens with the crowding of the roadways, more and more students spend longer hours alone with no adult supervision. Parents are now looking to others in the community to provide that social adjustment period for their children. Both educators and law enforcement have felt the pressure to fill that void, often resulting in a negative contact. Police have become more involved in social referrals and the manner in which they seek to obtain long-term solutions to a variety of problems involving school age youth.

Violence and its impact on society have been glamorized in the modern media. As acts of violence are now reported immediately, incidents such as the student shootings at Columbine, Jonesboro and most recently Santanna High in San Diego, give the perception that acts of violence are on the rise in our schools. In the recent Indicators of School Crime and Safety 2000, a report by the U.S. Department of Education, students were about two times as likely to be victims of a violent crime away from school as at school.[11] In addition, students between twelve and eighteen were victims of more than 2.7 million total crimes nationally. Of these crimes, 253,000 were serious, violent, and on campus. Between June 1997 and June 1998, there were forty-seven homicides on school grounds.[12] The exposure of the sensational incident at a school campus has given rise to research in

the area of predicting violent behavior of a student. In addition to this research, law enforcement has also changed the manner in which they respond to these violent incidents from a tactical perspective. Student behavior, more than any other indicator, is being reviewed for both trend analysis and for early warning. As early as 1991, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention conducted a national study regarding adolescent fighting, both on and off school campuses. The data indicates African Americans were more likely to report having been in a fight than either white or Hispanic students (12.5 percent, 6.2 percent, and 10 percent respectively).[13] How both the schools and the police address this particularly sensitive issue will loom largely in the positive continuance of relations with all community groups in seeking solutions to the problem of violence on campuses.

Because of the increase in population in California it can be expected the dropout rate will rise accordingly. The enrollment in private and public elementary and secondary schools is projected to increase by approximately 6 percent in the 2006.[14] This total is a national average. The projected increases for California and other western states are even more dramatic, with California expected to have a 20 percent increase in this same age group.[15] An issue that will likely be impacted by this increase will be the dropout rate.

The dropout factor that was cited earlier was the focus of a Rand study. The report looked at a variety of issues that may have impacted the dropout prior to actually dropping out of school. In addition, the report focused on the long-term factors that resulted from the dropout student behavior. The control group for this study covered substance abuse and it's impact on the behavioral factors of those that dropped out. The frequencies of the use, and the specifics of an early age acceptance of the use of the contraband, were also impacting factors.

The study looked at the linkage between cause and future impacts of a student who drops out of high school. The need for greater dependency on social services, such as welfare, medical, and unemployment assistance were cited. Furthermore, dropouts were more likely to enter the penal system. For example, nearly 60 percent of all jailed inmates across the nation completed less than twelve years of school.[16] One of the series of questions asked of the surveyed group, was about their use of alcohol, cigarettes and marijuana use over the previous one-month period. The scale used was 0–11, with eleven being use of the contraband more than 20 times in the past month. Of the surveyed adolescents, the average had used alcohol and cigarettes at a level of nearly 3.0 and marijuana 2.21 times in the same period.[17] The study found adolescents who use cigarettes at a level of 3.0 face a nearly 85 percent greater chance of being a dropout. For marijuana and alcohol use, the comparable increase in the odds of dropping out is 68 percent and 29 percent respectively.[18]

Drug use has not been the only indicator for dropouts. Family structure, repeating grades, educational aspirations all factor into this problem. Lack of parental involvement will not only impact the possibility of educational problems, but violence indicators as well. Studies have shown that male adolescents whose fathers fail to engage in any type of leisure activity with them, exhibited violent behavior as teenagers and adults and were more likely to be convicted for a violent offense.[19] Academic failure and a low bonding to schools have proved to be problematic. The relationship between poor academic progress and violence has been found to be stronger for females than males. In addition, behavior problems, as rated by teachers, when the student was ten years old predicted involvement in violence by the age of eighteen in more than 72 percent of the cases studied.[20]

The fear factor on school campuses has risen to new levels, even though the acts of violence and crime on campus has dropped. Police departments will find themselves more involved in threat assessment on campuses than ever before. If the partnerships are to provide a positive result, these assessments will require a level of teamwork and communication that has not been the norm. Educating those on both sides of the table as to what is a threat category will be crucial. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) classifies threats in four areas, direct, indirect, veiled, and conditional.[21] Discussions and training for educators and students alike will enhance the early warning that will need to exist in the environment of a campus community.

As with any partnership, be it in business, sports, or relationships; the need to continually communicate and look to the future for constant growth and development is also crucial for mid sized police departments and schools. Forecasting the relationship involved between the two organizations will require vision and leadership. Seeking solutions to the issues growth presents, will require risk-taking and not being afraid to try non-traditional ideas by both police and schools. Some of the problems these two institutions will face require a new look at old ways of doing business. Because it has always been done that way, will no longer be good enough. In the next chapter, trends and events as forecasted by professionals in a variety of fields will give pause to what and how the partnership of the future for law enforcement and schools can be molded and developed to deal with both new and old problems.

One Answer

If we allow ourselves to only look at today's issues, even though our world is extremely busy and we often cringe at thought of the rapidly changing events around us

daily, we will not only fail ourselves, but also those that depend on us. We want to believe a strategic plan will allow us to be more proactive, but the truth is, not even that can be planned out. Only having a crystal ball would eliminate the guesswork, so until the time comes, we must focus on our own ability to forecast and ponder the future: our children depend upon it.

The external threats loom large for this plan to have any success. These are often times that the ones that are least controlled will ultimately have the most visible impact in the implementation and follow though of any action. The unsure state of the political influence will create tremendous threat on the outcome of this plan. The changing jobs market, slow growth movements, legislative changes in grants, and the freedom in which sharing of information between schools and police can be enhanced.

The Plan

The school and police department will first need to identify the stakeholders that will play a significant role in the success of this plan. Included in this list will be the Boys and Girls Club of Tracy, San Joaquin County Women's Center and the students themselves. The best way to ensure success for this program will be a series of meetings to focus on the ability of a combined effort by all the parties to ensure a successful partnership in dealing with the dramatic growth issues that they will face. Keeping the group focused on the specific issue for future responses will be critical.

To ensure an effective partnership, dealing with the growth rate for school aged children, it is going to be necessary to influence these children at an earlier age than is currently being accomplished. According to an April 2000 report from the California State Attorney General's Office, 37 percent of high schools and middle schools in California

have no form of law enforcement present on campus.[22] To not only provide a safer environment, but also impact the influence that law enforcement can have in a positive fashion, officers will be placed on the 8 middle school campuses in the Tracy Unified School District. This presence falls directly into the category and guidelines that the Attorney General and State School Superintendent sought to unify through the School/Law Enforcement Partnership program in 1983. This partnership will design programs within each of these schools in dealing with conflict resolution, domestic violence and its fallout as well as strategies to positively impact school attendance and safety.

Currently the police department conducts no follow up on the children of a family that has been involved in a domestic violence incident. If a child does not fall victim in one of these cases, they are referred to only as a witness or dependent. After reviewing the literature, specifically the Rand report on drop out and violence rates as they apply to domestic violence, it seems crucial that additional follow up be required in these cases. All officers will receive information training that delineates the correlation between domestic violence cases and the impact on school aged children, even though they may not be victims. Officers will be required to forward information to the school district contact official and provide the name and school attended by the child involved in the domestic violence case. The information will be reviewed for the purposes of ascertaining a pattern that may have been developed with the student as to truancy and performance levels.

Once the information has been reviewed for problem tendencies, both the school professionals and the San Joaquin Women's Center personnel will be advised and a plan

will be developed to pro-actively pursue an intervention program that will help eliminate a cry for help that is not being heard.

The second prong of this three-prong approach will be the involvement of the police personnel on campus in the Character Count's training. This training will be provided to faculty, police and a parent advisory board for all middle school students. This program is based on "the six pillars of character: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship."[23] Through this classroom training, students will be exposed to a value based education system that will span the diversity that a growing community will be facing in the year 2006. Both the school faculty and the officer on campus will teach this training. The lack of trained school counselors will require this type of educational program to be introduced, particularly at the middle school level, due to the simple fact that as a child gets older, behavior changes are more difficult to alter. In addition to school curriculum, the same lesson plan will be provided through the Boys & Girls Club locations for those students who have been suspended.

The last part of this phase is the involvement of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Tracy. The problem that continues to haunt schools and the police today is what do they do with the suspended or expelled student? This is the student that needs specific attention, yet due to the nature of the system, they are the ones that tend to fall through the cracks. These are the students that end up committing crimes while away from the campus with no parental supervision. As this plan is crafted for tomorrow's problems, it is safe to assume this trend will not show changes in direction. If anything as the community grows, so will the problem. These are the students who tend to become more involved in crime during school hours than others. Their suspensions or expulsions may be due to their

involvement in a violent act at school or the involvement with alcohol or drugs, referred to as a gateway offense. As of 1998-99, the increase in these types of offenses in California Schools had increased 11 percent in middle school alone.[24]

In addition to the criminal ramifications involving these students, a financial impact on the school district is, and will be, experienced. By state law, the Tracy School District is provided $25.00 per student per day they are in class. When the student is suspended, funding is no longer available for that student because the he or she is not in school. By utilizing a Boys & Girls Club location as an alternate facility for these suspended students to be placed, the funding will be diverted to the Clubs for the specific programs intended to change a behavior in the student. This will also be enhanced by involvement with the Women's Center as a type of community service that will be applied to the suspended student.

Police and educators alike may be skeptics, but no challenge is greater than guiding our youth into the future. As leaders we must provide the vision that others will follow. Changing behavior patterns in our children, especially if it is caused by the very people responsible for bringing them into the world, can be accomplished by anyone, as long as it gets done. Seeking to break the cycle of violence in Domestic Violence cases, especially in cases when a school age child may be a victim we have not noticed in the past, cries for our attention. We can no longer stand on the sidelines and look for someone else to do the job; our children, our future, depend on it.

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