

Students Mental Health in School

By: Evelyn Christner, Hadley Snyder, Cailin Lewis, Mel Tomko, Naomi Kuzmanic, and Alexa Springer

2025-2026 Marshall Ranch Project Citizen Submission



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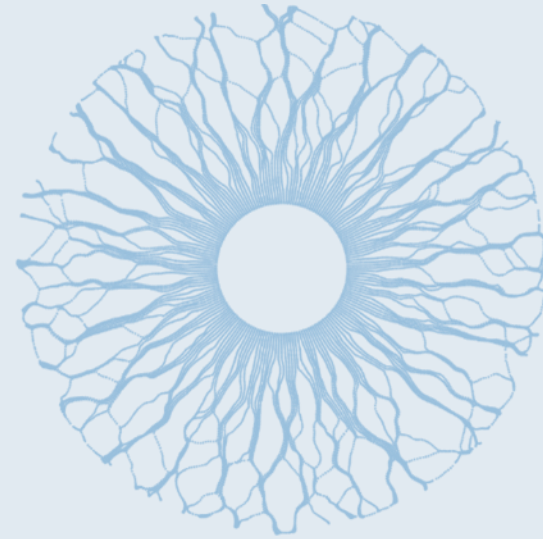
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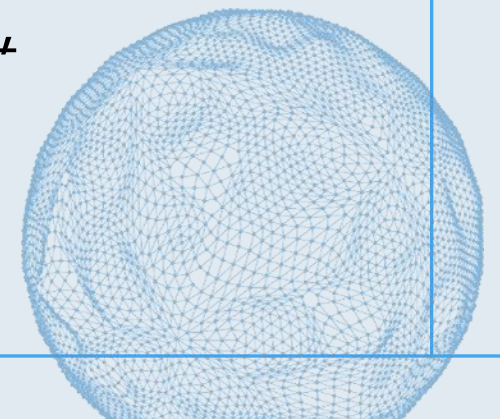
Exploring and Explaining the Problem

By: Hadley Snyder and Cailin Lewis



What is the Problem?

Our problem is our school is not having an SRO come in to teach us kids about mental health and how to keep a healthy mind in our everyday lives. The lack of involvement with students has left us with choices of worse actions towards ourselves and our peers. An SRO may say hello and hand out stickers, but as far as we remember, they have never come in to support us or advise us. Without an SRO teaching us, we risk being on drugs, drinking, or making bad choices as a student.



What is an SRO?

According to City of Phoenix, an SRO is a School Resource Officer. They are placed in schools to enhance safety and foster positive relationships in schools through community-focused public safety services. We mainly have a SLO, which according to our principal, is a School Liaison Officer, but they mainly helps at events. They come to the school from time to time, though us sixth graders have only seen them around five times in the past seven years.

What's the need?

- Our need is simple: someone to be at schools to help students
- SROs (School Resource Officer) , SLOs (School Liaison Officer), SSCs (Student Safety Coach), Therapist, or Social Worker
- With youth becoming more involved in social media, it is vital that they have someone to go back to at school to get help or to talk to

Interview with SRO Gerald Sydnor

Gerald Sydnor has been with Glendale Police for 24 years and has held many different positions. He is currently with Ironwood for the 13 years as an SRO, coach and teacher. Assists the faculty, students, and helps with events.

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Q. Is it okay if we interview you?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you teach classes in pairs or one on one, or just classes?

A. I do both. Sometimes I talk to kids that have problems with one another, or I talk to classes all together.

Q. How often do you have to talk about substance abuse?

A. I sometimes teach about them to students. The main drug is your everyday drug: stress. They are kids who feel bad then take drugs to feel better. For example, there may be a kid who vapes. Then they get in trouble. After they get suspended, their grades fail since they aren't in class and it keeps going in a vicious cycle.

Q. What topics might you talk about here to us?

A. I would talk to you about substance abuse, and distracted driving.

Interview with SRO Gerald Sydnor Continued

Q. What would you do when a child has a mental issue?

A. I would ask them questions like "When did you eat last?," "When did you last have water?," "When did you last have a good night's sleep," and "When did you last take your medicine?"

Q. Do you feel like you have helped students and why?

A. Yes. I have had students come back and say thank you, that their problem has gotten better and that the conversation helped.

Gerald Sydnor has been with Glendale Police for 24 years and has held many different positions. He is currently with Ironwood for the 13 years as an SRO, coach and teacher. Assists faculty, students, and with events.

Q. What is the most common conflict?

A. Conflict in general. People talking about weapons, inappropriate language and gestures

Q. How many classes do you teach a week? A month?

A. Once a week, about 3-4 times a month.

How many schools have permanent SROs?

9 out of 43 schools in our district have an SRO or an SLO always teaching on their campus.

This benefits them since it gives some to talk to about problems or ask questions and get answers.



Interview with Nicole Thompson

Q. Is it okay to interview you?

A. Yes

**Q. Do you see our problem as an important one?
What about community members?**

A. Yes, because our mindset is important to be a better person, student, and friend. Community members would also see this as an important problem our youth is so involved with social media and technology that they need to learn how to keep a good safe space.

Q. What policy if any, does the government have to deal with this problem?

A. The SRO's not fulfilling their job descriptions.

Nicole is a parent of a sixth grader and is a family doctor at Adelante Healthcare Clinic.

Q. What are the advantages or disadvantages of this policy?

A. The SROs will provide important information for our students, but it'll hold the SRO or school accountable by fines.

Q. How might the policy be improved?

A. Having available therapist or such



Alternative Policy

By: Alexa Springer and Evelyn Christner

Alternative Policy 1

If we can't get an SRO in a classroom to teach and mentor students, there are a variety of other options.

- Social Worker
- Student Safety Coach (SSC)
- Therapist

They are all effective, with different meanings and costs.

What are alternatives to an SRO?

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Social Worker

- Help kids calm down in classrooms
- Had groups with kids in the same grade (played games with them, had lunch them)
- "...improve students' academic performance and social development...help students with problems such as aggressive behavior or bullying..."

Student Safety Coach (SSC)

- "...[see] student in a morning class begins to show signs that he is struggling and refuses to do an assignment, for example, the teacher can contact a safety coach..."
- "...may ask the student to take a walk and ask [them] what's going on. The coach then can help negotiate a resolution, such as time for the student to do a preferred activity ..."

Therapist

- "...help students thrive emotionally, socially, and academically. These mental health professionals work with kids of all ages, tackling issues like anxiety, depression, behavior challenges, academic pressure, and trauma."

Cost of Each

School Resource Officer (SRO)

According to ZipRecruiter, it would cost "\$34.35 an hour, \$1,374 a week, \$5,954 a month, and \$71,449 a year."

Therapist

According to ZipRecruiter, it would cost "\$30.46 an hour, \$243.62 a day, \$1,218 a week, \$5,278 a month, and \$63,341 a year.

Student Safety Coach (SSC)

According to ZipRecruiter, it would cost "\$27.04 an hour, \$216.16 a day, \$1,081 a week, \$4,686 a month and \$55,919 a year."

Social Worker

According to indeed, it would cost "\$28.10 per an hour, \$263 per a day, \$977 per a week, \$3,780 a month and, \$53,382 a year."

Supporting and Opposing Groups

There are many groups or government organizations that support or oppose having SROs in schools to teach the youth. Such as the following:

Supporting

- National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO): Promotes placing trained SROs in every school.
- Arizona School Resource Officers Association (ASROA) Protects, mentors, and inspires the next generation.

Opposing

- Policy and Think Tank Groups: Groups of students that want action for juvenile justice advocate for removing SROs from schools, citing the lack of evidence that their role in increasing violence, rather than decreasing it.

Agreements and Disagreements

Agreements

- They will teach about how to have student success
- Help with a student's mental health
- Helps a student work through problems

Disagreements

- They will teach about a subject not approved by parents
- It will not students with their problems
- There will not be enough funding to provide enough SRO's or Alternatives for the district

Alternative Policy 2

Another alternative to having an SRO teach and mentor is to have support group therapy. We will get to what it is on the next slide.

A few options for teaching it are,

- Therapist
- SSC
- Social Worker
- A trusted adult

They all work and help children but can have different meanings for different individuals.

What is Support Group Therapy?

According to Citizen Advocates Blog, support group therapy is a gathering of individuals who

- Share similar experiences
- Deal with Chronic illness
- Deal with Grief
- Safe place for sharing
- Gives empathy and mutual support

How Support Group Therapy would work at Marshall Ranch

The idea would be to have 4 different groups.

1. Struggle with mental well-being- negative thoughts about themselves.
2. Stigmatized- told that they don't belong.
3. Suicidal thoughts- thoughts telling them to kill or harm themselves.
4. Victims-bullying, SA, and abuse.

These groups will help kids overcome what is happening, engage with others, and the therapist gets more kids at on time. It would cost \$260,000 for four more psychologists.

Supporting and Opposing Groups

Supporting

- National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI): Offers programs like NAMI Connection and provides support, education, and advocacy, fostering community care.
- Mental Health America (MHA) : Promotes mental health well-being and supports diverse support group structures.

Opposing

- Individuals with Extreme Social Anxiety: The pressure of interacting in a group can make symptoms worse rather than relieve them.
- People with special needs: They feel unheard during or unnoticed during sessions of group therapy.

Agreements and Disagreements

Agreements

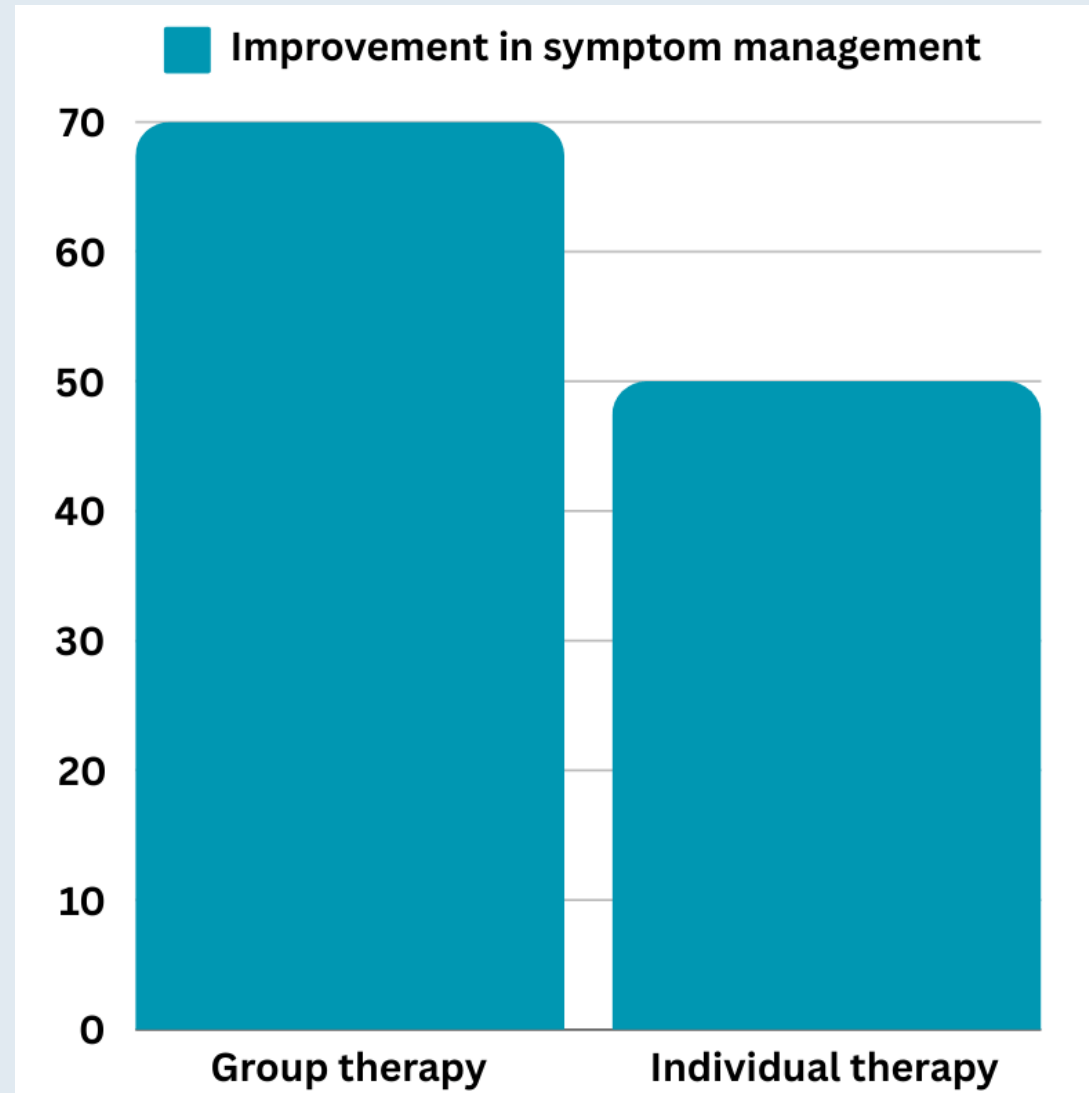
- You can have the ability to meet and relate to other
- It's designed to be judgment-free
- You can decide how much to participate
- It's a cost-effective option

Disagreements

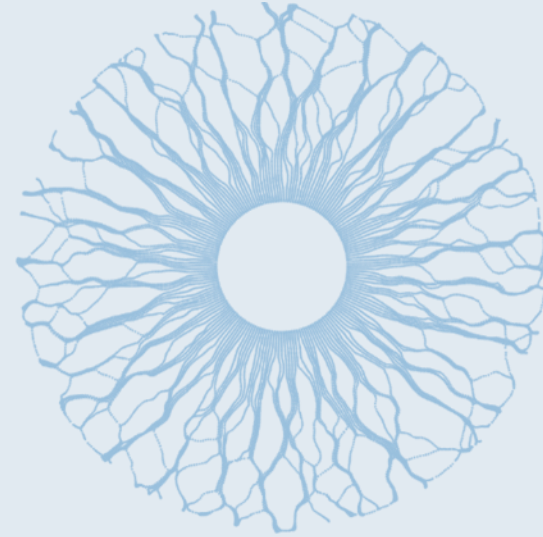
- You have less personal attention
- Has limited perspectives about problems
- Not as effective in developing social skills
- Does not provide the opportunity to discover yourself

Is It Effective?

A study taken by Click2Pro shows that kids with Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID, commonly also known as Multiple Personality Disorder), had improvement in symptom management.



Proposed Policy



**By: Hadley Snyder, Cailin Lewis, Evelyn Christner,
Mel Tomko, Alexa Springer, and Naomi Kuzmanic**

Current Public Policy

- Arizona Senate Bill § 15-154 - It is required that SRO's teach students. They may teach about topics like legal system, drug awareness, or safety for students.
- School Safety Program - Support safe and effective learning environments for all students. Provides funding for SROs, Juvenile Probation Officers, School Counselors, and School Social Workers on campuses.
- Arizona Senate Bill 1469 The Department of Education will support all costs to implement SROs, juvenile probation officers, school counselors, and school social workers

Proposed Policy

- Our proposed policy is to have SRO or one of the Alternatives placed in every school in Peoria Unified School District.
- It will Cost around \$2,295,426 to \$3,072,307 annually.
- The addition of SRO will make a positive difference in our community by helping the next generation change for the better.

Is It Constitutional?

Our proposed policy, according to the Florida Atlantic University Undergraduate law journal, "The presence of SROs does not inherently infringe on students' rights." This shows that it is lawful that SROs are allowed to come into classrooms and teach.



How Will It Work?

- School's will have someone on campus that they can either talk to or feel safe around. An example would be a school resource officer (SRO), a children's therapist, or group counseling.

How Has This Been Implemented In Other Schools?

At the end of the 2019-2020 school year, there were approximately 23,400 sworn school resource officers (SROs) in the United States, according to a [November 2023 report](#) published by the Bureau of Justice Statistics of the U.S. Department of Justice.

What is the effect of school social workers on teachers?

25%

**Percentage Increase of Teacher
Satisfaction After Working with
School Social Workers**



Teens feel most negative about how bullying is handled at their schools. They are more likely to hold negative opinions about how these issues are addressed compared to school parents, particularly on addressing violent behaviors.

How well do you feel your school addresses the following among its students?

Teens

Most Positive
(Extremely + Very Well)



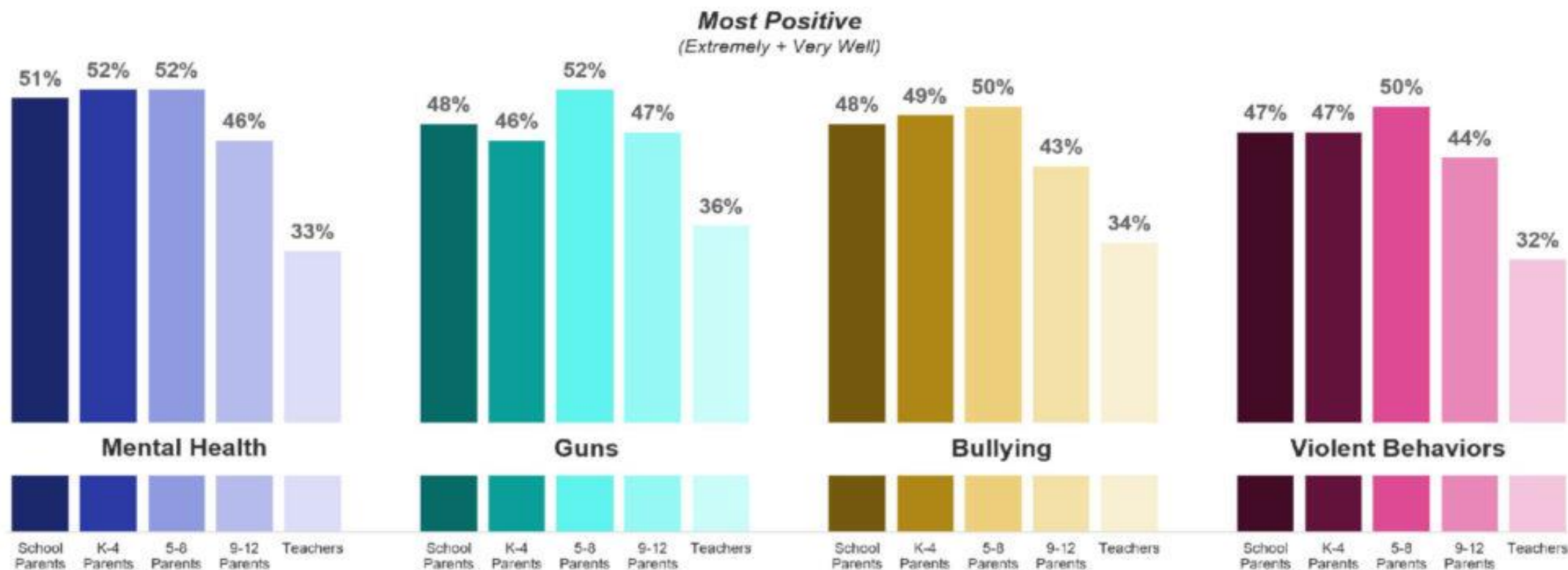
School Parents

Guns: 49% (+1)
Mental Health: 49% (+12)
Violent Behaviors: 50% (+15)
Bullying: 46% (+13)

Teachers are less positive than parents when assessing how their schools address mental health, guns, bullying, and violent behaviors. Only about one-third of teachers say their schools are doing extremely/very well in any of those four categories.

How well do you feel your youngest/oldest child's school addresses the following among its students?

How well do you feel your school addresses the following among its students?



Source: Survey conducted June 15, 2022 – June 21, 2022, among U.S. adults

Survey conducted June 15, 2022 – June 25, 2022, among U.S. Teachers

Note: Results are composite numbers between those who were asked about their youngest child and those who were asked about their oldest child.

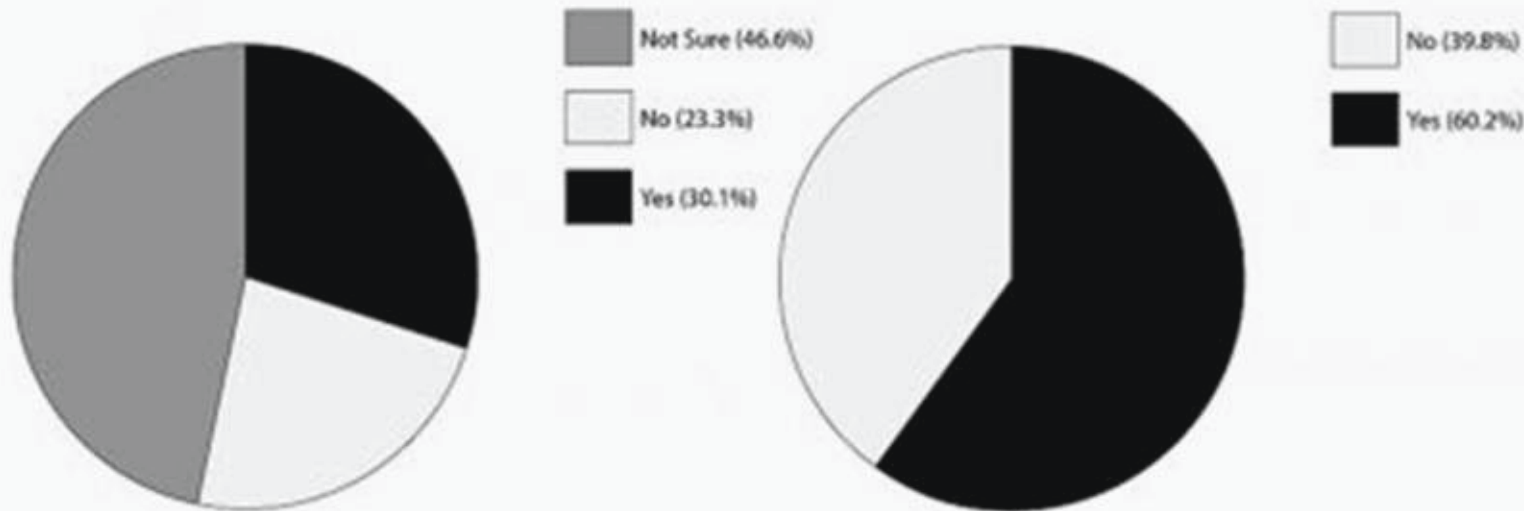
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Nation Wide Survey

How do South students feel about SROs?

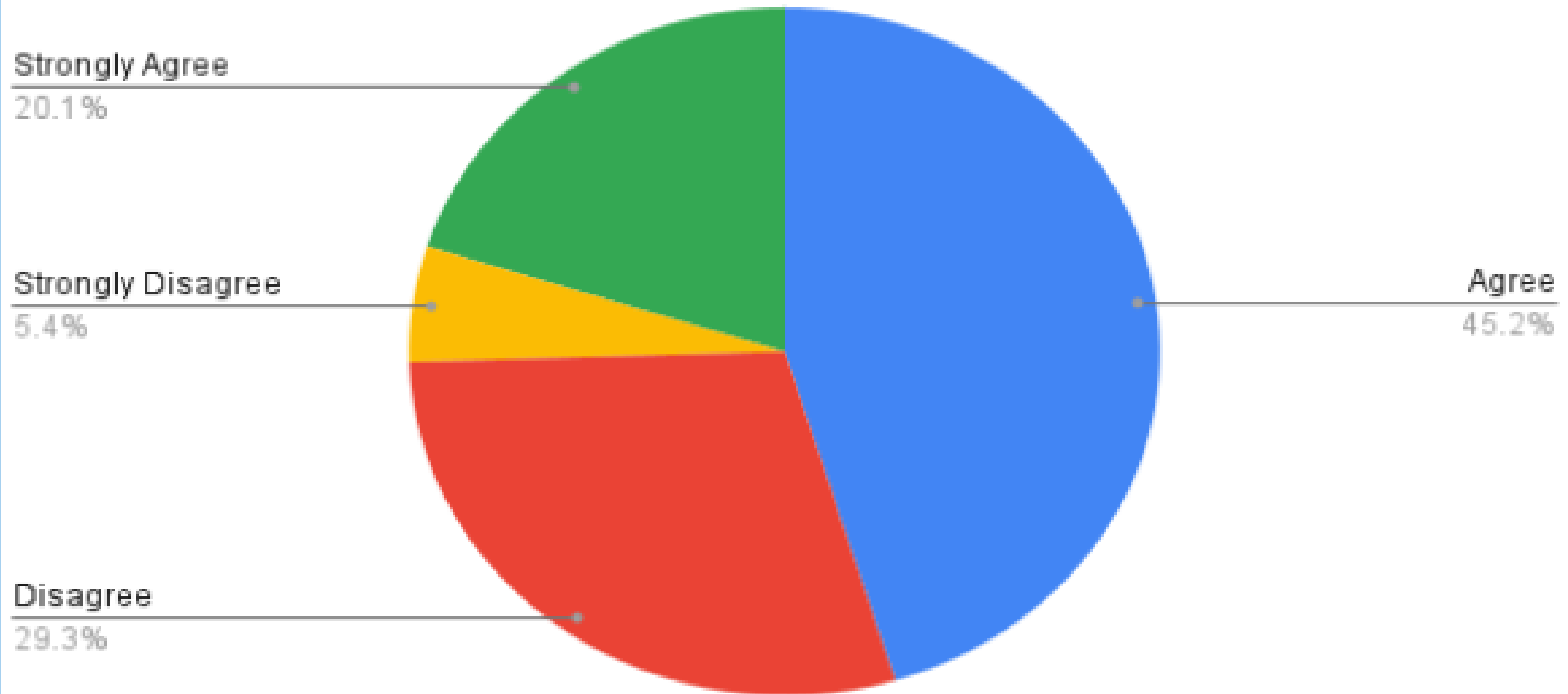
Do you feel safer with a SRO in school? Were you aware South had a SRO?



- Some kids don't know their school even has an SRO
- Majority of students do in fact feel safer with an SRO than not.

South Highschool in Minneapolis, Minnesota that faces some problems like Ironwood and other PUSD high schools.

The main job of our school resource officer is to teach about safety and law enforcement.



Nation Wide Survey

Interview with Lauren Tolmachoff

We are in the process of getting an interview with Glendale City Council Cholla District Representative Lauren Tolmachoff. According to the City of Glendale, "Lauren has been a Realtor® since 2004 following a successful career in banking. She is an NAR Realtor® Champion, member of the Women's Council of Realtors and a proud member and past president of the Glendale Rotary Club."



Interview with Jeff Tobey

We are in the process of getting an interview with our Peoria Unified School District Governing Board Clerk. According to Peoria Unified School District, "With over 20 years in law enforcement, Mr. Tobey has held roles in Patrol, Neighborhood Enforcement, the Tactical Response Unit, and School Safety." We would like to see how he feels about SRO's placement and job in schools.



Interview with Officer Louis Bentivegna

**Louis Bentivegna is a 29-year veteran
in the City of Phoenix Police
Department.**

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Q. Are you a parent of any children?

A. I have two children

Q. Did they go to a school with a permanent SRO?

A. Not in elementary but at Mountain Ridge they did.

Q. What do you feel an SRO's job is?

A. Assist with investigation, child abuse, and keeping children safe.

Q. Did you see any benefits?

A. They did really need one since they had a dad as an officer and there was not overall problem with the children.

Interview with Officer Louis Bentivegna continued

Louis Bentivegna is a 29-year veteran in the City of Phoenix Police Department.

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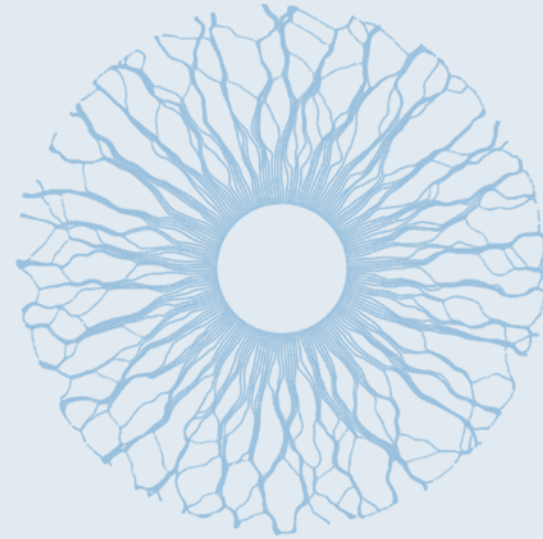
He gave us some ideas to help them connect with the community:

- **Coffee with a cop**
- **Academic Adventure SRO stand**
- **Junior Cadet Program**
- **Law Enforcement Appreciation Day**
- **9-11 cookout**
- **Police Week**
- **Tributes to Officers**
- **Sponsoring a club**



Action Plan

By: Mel Tomko and Naomi Kuzmanic



Interview with Kassidy Stack

Kassidy Stack is a teacher at Marshall Ranch and has a psychology degree from Arizona State University (ASU).

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Q. Is it okay if I interview you?

A. Yes

Q. How effective would an SRO teaching be?

A. It depends on the population of a school and the situation of the school.

Q. With the situation of our school, what topics should we be taught?

A. Social awareness- things that you should or should not say to someone, bullying- how to handle your issues, coping mechanisms- how to cope with problems at home and school, and fighting-how to solve an argument before it turns into a physical altercation.

Q. How many times have you seen an SRO on campus?

A. Only a handful of times, four to five times.

Interview with Kassidy Stack continued

Kassidy Stack is a teacher at Marshall Ranch and has a psychology degree from Arizona State University (ASU).

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Q. How many situations do you feel an SRO could prevent?

A. He may not be able to prevent them; he can teach how to prevent but can't ensure that it will work.

Q. Do you think support group therapy would be effective?

A. I do feel that it would be effective since it will let people with the same experiences talk to each other and let people from diverse backgrounds and perspectives learn from each other.

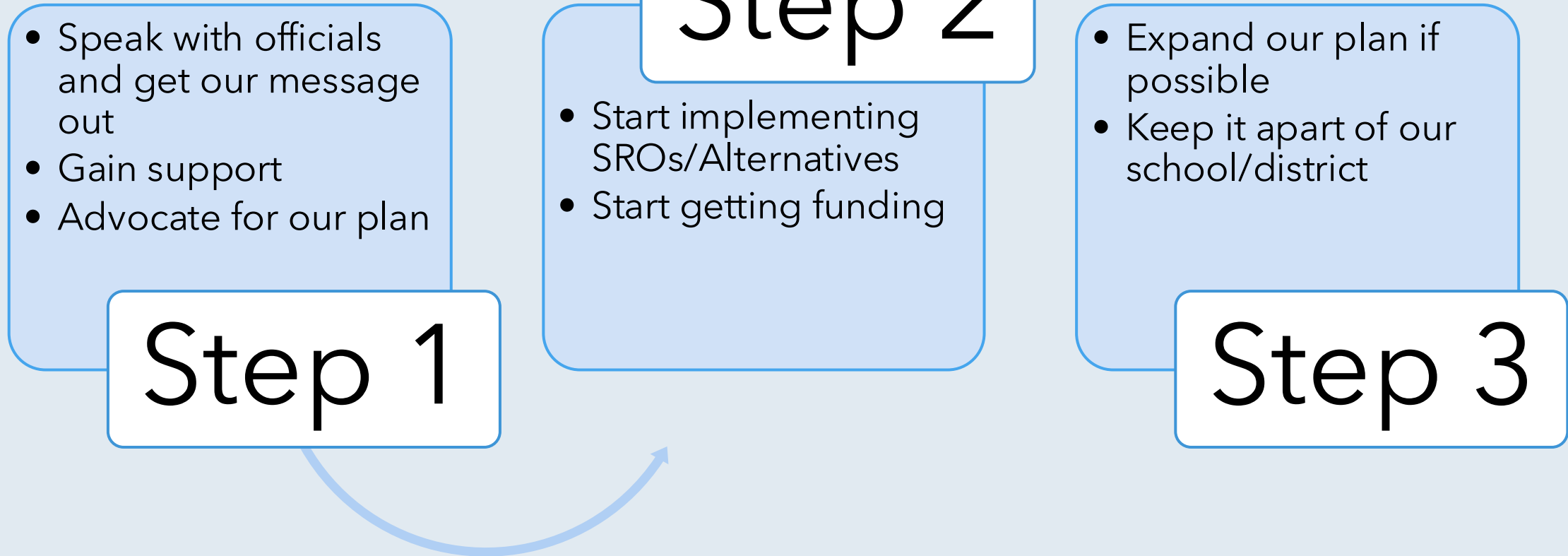
Q. Do you feel you having another person added or having an alternative added help?

A. I feel that adding another person to a team of social workers or psychologists will probably be beneficial.

Our Action Plan

- Organize places of support for students
- Educate students on how they can support their classmates
- Educate students on how to access our support resources
- Have the SRO teach students
- Hire social workers or therapists
- Encourage students to speak about their mental health with an SRO or an Alternative

The Process



Step 1 - Building the Foundation

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- Talk with key influential community members
 - Such as members of the city council, district administrators, people who handle funding of SROs, therapists, social workers, etc.
- Advocate
 - Represent our school at events
 - Speak at said events about our plan
- Gain support
 - Identify supporting and opposing groups and speak with them

Who Can We Talk With?

- Board members
- City officials
- School administrators
- Teachers
- People from the Peoria Unified School District
- Parents
- Experts on psychology, mental health, violence, etc.
- Students
- Citizens near the Glendale or Peoria area

How Will We Gain Support?

- Present our research
- Work with experts
- Spread awareness
- Have influential people support our plan
- Explain why our plan is important
- Provide alternative funding programs
- Have events displaying mental health and how it affects our life

How Will We Advocate?

- Represent our project at events
- Conduct sufficient research
- State our goals and how we'll achieve them
- Communicate the steps we're taking and where we are in our plan
- Create websites and surveys

Who Will Support Us?

- Students who struggle
- Students who have trouble focusing
- Parents of students who struggle
- Teachers who have struggling students in their class
- Mental health professionals
- People who have struggled with their own mental health

Who Will Oppose Us?

- People who do not believe in mental health
- People who do not believe mental health is an issue
- People who do not want to pay money for an SRO or an Alternative
- Parents who do not want their child to be taught about mental health

Step 2 - Funding and Implementing

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- Find proper funding and support
 - Reach out to sponsors or organizations
 - Raise awareness about the need for SROs to raise funding and support
- Implementing SROs
 - Make the students aware of their SRO
 - Let the SRO educate the students about various topics
- Implementing the alternatives
 - If possible, we would like to have different workers that are similar to SROs available to help the students such as therapists, SSCs, social workers, and trusted adults that have been professionally trained

How Will We Implement It?

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- Speak to employers
- Provide the funding sources we researched
- Provide laws and research to prove us as credible
- Provide Alternatives
- Work with officials
- Speak with SROs
- Implement it in our school

How Will We Fund It?

- Our school's extra Title 1 funding
- Federal grants
- Fundraisers
- Donations

Step 3 - Final Steps

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- Ensure the role we select from the Alternatives is permanent
 - Create a lasting impression using our research and evidence to show we must have an SRO or Alternative
- Expanding the plan
 - Go to district board meetings and convince board members to make SROs or Alternatives permanent across the district

How Will We Keep It?

- Social worker as a permanent position
- Ensure the role will remain funded
- Enforce social workers/SROs as a necessary policy
- Speak with officials to make sure SROs will do their jobs



Summarization and Citations

By: Evelyn Christener, Hadley Snyder, Cailin Lewis, Mel Tomko, Naomi Kuzmanic, and Alexa Springer

Summarization of the Problem

To summarize the problem,

- Children aren't getting the attention they need from an SLO, SRO, or anything in between.
- Without support, we are more delicate and risk mindset and emotional problems in our day-to-day life
- Who will we go to if we need support and can't trust an adult at the school

Summarization of the Alternative Policy

To summarize the Alternative Policy,

- To have a person at every school in the district to help students
- The person could be a Social Worker, Student Safety Coach (SSC), Therapist
- To have support group therapy available for any student on campus with a certified instructor in charge

Summarization of the Proposed Policy

To summarize the Proposed Policy,

- To always have a version of an SRO in every school in the district
- The costs of the Alternatives varies
- The funding processes varies
- It is constitutional since SRO (or an Alternative) do not infringe on a student's rights.

Summarization of the Action Plan

To summarize the Action Plan,

- We are going to gain support and raise awareness with students, teachers, and parents
- Raise funds so we can afford an SRO or an Alternative
- Implement one of the roles we spoke about during our presentation
- Keep spreading awareness and making it a permanent position at Marshall Ranch and possibly at every school in the district

Thank You!

We would like to thank a few people.

- **Mr. Johnson** and **Ms. Mathes** for giving us advice along the way
- **Nicole Thompson, Gerald Sydnor** and **Kassidy Stack** for our interviews
- **Mr. Harper** for giving us this wonderful opportunity and support
- **Spectators** for taking your time to observe our presentation



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