



North Carolina Task Force for Racial Equity in Criminal Justice

Working Group #2

Meeting #3

Date: 25 August 2020

Time: 9:00 AM EST

Chairperson: Erik Hooks

In Attendance: Hooks, Erik; Gartin, Billy; Pittman, Kerwin; Earls, Anita; Welty, Jeff; Wells, Talley; Maxwell, Deborah Dicks; Wind, Angelica; Letteney, John; Spolar, Ellen; Sabin, Greg; Stein, Josh; Clemons, James; Lassiter, Billy; Greene, Jacqui; Corpening, J.H.

Members Not In Attendance: N/A

MEETING MINUTES

I. Welcome

Working Group Chairperson Erik Hooks: Welcomed the group and recognized the public audience. Chairperson Hooks welcomed the meeting's three presenters, Billy Lassiter, Jacqui Greene, and Judge J.H. Corpening, and recognized Justice Earls for introductory remarks.

Justice Anita Earls: Welcomed the group and looks forward to hearing the discussions.

Attorney General Josh Stein: Seconded Justice Earls.

Chairperson Hooks: Chairperson Hooks recognized the first presenter, N.C. Department of Public Safety Deputy Secretary Billy Lassiter, who is an expert in juvenile justice.

II. School Resource Officers

Billy Lassiter: Presented on School Resource Officers (SROs). *The presentation is made public.*

Chairperson Hooks: Thanked Deputy Secretary Lassiter for his presentation and recognized Jacqui Greene for her presentation.

Jacqui Greene: Presented on the impacts and approaches of SROs. *This presentation is made public.*

Chairperson Hooks: Thanked Jacqui Greene for her comments and recognized Judge J.H. Corpening for his presentation.

Judge J.H. Corpening: Thanked Task Force members for their attention to the issue of SROs. Judge Corpening started working on school justice partnerships in 2012. These partnerships create a framework to keep kids in school and out of court as long as they do not present a safety issue. Often, students fall behind if they are given suspensions, which leads to greater behavioral and educational issues. School justice partnerships can help build positive relationships between schools and their students. New Hanover County Schools created a guidance called "When to Call 911." The guide helps teachers understand when to call in SROs and when to deal with behavioral issues through school administration.

The goal of school discipline should be to correct misbehavior rather than simply punish. Often, the delays in issuing punishment through the court system prevent students from learning from their mistakes. School justice partnerships help increase racial equity by tailoring discipline to the student's unique situation. Keeping kids in school to deal with behavioral issues reduces racial disparities in graduation rates. In New Hanover County Schools, the school justice partnership dramatically decreased the percentage of students referred to SROs who enter the court system. School board attorneys are often resistant to implementing school justice partnerships. This issue could be resolved with legislative mandates and more robust statutes related to the use of SROs.

Chairperson Hooks: Thanked all of today's speakers and recognized Deborah Dicks Maxwell for comments.

Deborah Dicks Maxwell: There is an increase in elementary school suspension rates when SROs are present in those schools. Having police interact with young students fuels the school-to-prison pipeline. It is important that school and court personnel are trained in mental health and diversion. There is also a need for more social workers, school psychologists, and counselors in schools. Students need to reach their correct mental health frame to further their education.

Chairperson Hooks: Recognized Talley Wells for comments.

Talley Wells: Researched school justice partnerships and SROs. In conversations with advocates across the state, Wells found that there should be more readily-available data to the public on school discipline and court referrals by age, race, and referral charge. Recommendations would be helpful to support school justice partnerships including convening authority for juvenile judges, statutory requirements for MOUs, and requiring progressive discipline prior to juvenile court referrals. Mental health training for all school personnel and SROs should be increased. Mental health services for students should be expanded. There is a need to focus on not just SROs, but the entire exclusionary discipline system. School personnel, especially administrators, should be

trained on the appropriate use of SROs and school justice partnership MOUs. There is a strong difference of opinion on whether SROs should even be in schools, especially elementary schools.

Chairperson Hooks: Recognized Sgt. Billy Gartin for comments.

Sgt. Billy Gartin: Asked Judge Corpening what the resistance is to do the work of creating school justice partnerships.

Judge Corpening: There is resistance to forming school justice partnerships within school systems. However, New Hanover County Schools has seen success with their partnership.

Sgt. Billy Gartin: If we can afford to put SROs in every school, why can't we afford to provide adequate behavioral professionals in schools? It is important to have people who can not only stop the behavior, but also address the root cause of the behavior. If we're trying to help kids, money should not be the hang up.

Chairperson Hooks: Thanked Sgt. Gartin for his comments and recognized Kerwin Pittman for comments.

Kerwin Pittman: We need more mental health training for staff in schools and more services for students. Continued racial equity training is helpful for all school personnel. If we can spend this much money on SROs, we should be able to provide adequate mental health professionals in schools. Pittman would like to see data on the raise the age gap. Pittman would also like to see data for referrals to the court system.

Chairperson Hooks: Thanked Kerwin Pittman for his comments and recognized Angelica Wind.

Angelica Wind: Supports the previous comments of Working Group members. It is important to have dedicated funding to mental health personnel, especially social workers, in schools. In Asheville, Wind's organization provided training on the effects of adverse childhood circumstances on school performance. Wind would like more information on the intensive prevention services model in Philadelphia. Continual training on racial equity would help build understanding of these issues in schools. Schools should be able to decide if they want an SRO officer or not.

Chairperson Hooks: Thanked Angelica Wind for her comments and recognized Chief John Letteney for comments.

Chief John Letteney: Thanked the presenters for their research and information. In Wake County, they refer to New Hanover as the model for school justice partnerships. It is important to have a strong MOU with clear roles for the SRO. SROs should be fully trained in CIT so they are aware of the full range of services available to students. Administrators should be trained on the role of the SRO. Chief Letteney would like to see research on the home environment when students receive exclusionary discipline. SROs do bring benefits to schools through coaching, recruiting, and safety. The state does not provide adequate funding for SROs or for school behavioral resources. All school personnel must work together to treat behavioral issues and prevent incidents.

Chairperson Hooks: Will make information available to Chief Letteney. The group will need to focus on leveraging the entire school system to create better outcomes. The Safer Schools Task Force is much further along in addressing this issue, so Sec. Hooks would like to recommend that the Working Group support their work. Chairperson Hooks recognized Jeff Welty to lead a follow-up discussion on the previous meeting.

III. Follow Up from Meeting #2

Jeff Welty: Presented on the findings from a Working Group survey. *This presentation is made public.*

Chairperson Hooks: Thanked Welty and staff for their work. Funding will always be an issue, so the group must be thoughtful about areas where they must request the legislature for funding and areas where they can exert influence without the legislature. The group could look at funding pilot co-responder or CAHOOTs programs through the legislature and the Governor's Crime Commission. Given the time constraints, Working Group members should direct further comments to staff.

Justice Anita Earls: Will send comments to the group via email.

Talley Wells: Thanked the speakers for their presentations.

Chairperson Hooks: Thanked the Working Group members and staff for their work and adjourned the meeting.

Next meeting: Tuesday, September 8, 2020 at 2:00 p.m.

DATA TEAM REQUESTS/QUESTIONS

1. Data on the raise the age gap.
2. Data on school referrals to the court system.