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## Board of Education

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### INFORMATION

<b>TITLE:</b>	School District Police Department Update
<b>DATE:</b>	August 7, 2019
<b>RESPONSIBLE ADMINISTRATOR:</b>	Doug Brubaker, Ph.D. Superintendent
<b>VISION 2023 STRATEGY:</b>	Strategy 2: Equity, Strategy 4: Learning Environment/Facilities, Strategy 5: Staffing, Strategy 7: Wellness

### BACKGROUND/CONSIDERATIONS:

School police officer programs have expanded across the United States as security concerns have escalated. Act 629 of 2019 enabled school districts and other entities to establish police departments. On June 10, the Board approved establishing one in Fort Smith Public Schools. On July 11, 2019, the District's request to establish a police department was approved by the Commission on Law Enforcement Standards and Training.

The Vision 2023 Strategic Planning team identified additional School Resource Officers (SROs) as a high priority need. However, citing recruitment and retention issues, the leadership of the Fort Smith Police Department said that the FSPD would not expand the number of officers at FSPS schools through the SRO program. As a result, the 2018 Millage Proposal did not include the three additional School Resource Officer (SRO) positions that were initially prioritized as a millage line item by the Citizens Committee.

The District has found other ways to enhance security within our schools. Arkansas law has allowed school districts to hire Certified School Security Officers (CSSOs). The district required that CSSO candidates also be licensed law enforcement officers. Through an innovative agreement with the Sebastian County Sheriff's Department, the three officers hired in 2018 have been overseen by that agency. The three CSSO positions were funded by cutting central office positions and reallocating other existing resources as part of the 2018-2019 budget.

**VISION 2023 STRATEGIES** – **1. Career Planning:** Develop and implement education and career pathways so that each student graduates with a viable plan and relevant skill set for his or her future. **2. Equity:** Develop and implement a system-wide plan to provide all students with the resources they need to optimize their learning. **3. Instruction:** Design, develop and implement programs to promote rigor, relevance, collaboration, critical- thinking skills and learning environments designed to meet each student's unique needs and aspirations. **4. Learning Environment/Facilities:** Align resources, facilities and technology strategically and equitably across the district to maximize security and enhance the learning environment. **5. Staffing:** Recruit and retain highly-qualified faculty, staff and administration. **6. Technology:** Provide appropriate technology that is consistently available, effectively supported and equitably distributed for group and individual instruction. **7. Wellness:** Develop and train empathetic and nurturing employees to be sensitive to and supportive of the needs of all children and families.

In addition, the District has maintained its partnership with the City of Fort Smith to jointly fund and deploy four (4) School Resource Officers (SROs). The SRO program with FSPD represents an annual

investment of approximately \$120,000 by the City of Fort Smith in the safety and security of our students. In an era of increased security concerns across our country, the Administration remains committed to continuing this partnership while expanding security resources within our schools using other available strategies.

Act 629 of 2019 now allows the District to begin the transition toward directly employing the three Certified School Security Officers that have also been reserve deputies as part of the Sebastian County Sheriff's Department. Mr. Huber, Supervisor of Safety and Security, and Mr. Hollenbeck, Director of Security and Facilities, will lead the department. The current Certified School Security Officers (CSSOs) will become Fort Smith Public Schools Police Officers. No additional positions have been recommended for the coming year.

Members of the Safety and Security team are in the process of completing paperwork necessary to establish the Fort Smith Public Schools Police Department. Some of the key benefits to making this transition include the following:

- The School Officers will now have access to the same support system as other agencies such as the Arkansas Crime Information Center (ACIC). This is a statewide system that interfaces with the National Crime Information Center. These systems will enhance student and staff safety by giving officers the ability to determine sex offender status or violent criminal history.
- School Officers will also have access to the Arkansas Law Enforcement Training Academy and the Arkansas Criminal Justice Institute. These entities provide free training to all law enforcement officers in the State of Arkansas. The School Police will also have access to the Internet Crimes Against Children State Task Force (ICAC). This will increase our ability to respond to Social Media threats to our schools and potential threats to our students.

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

This is an informational agenda item. No board action is requested.

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