

Youth Service Officer (YSO) Gap Analysis

Executive Summary

The Beaverton School District conducted a comprehensive gap analysis of the Youth Resource Officer (YSO) program at the Superintendent's Leadership meeting on January 9, 2025. This analysis, incorporating survey input from all building leaders (administrators, assistant administrators, and district-level leaders), examined YSOs' current value and impact on school safety, student well-being, and community relations. **Overall, the findings indicate strong support for the YSO program's continuation**, citing numerous benefits to safety and student support while identifying improvement areas to enhance its effectiveness and community trust.

Key highlights include:

- **Critical Role in Safety:** An overwhelming majority of school leaders view YSOs as essential partners in maintaining school safety. YSOs contribute to quick emergency response, threat prevention, and law enforcement coordination, which many believe cannot be readily replaced by alternative services. Leaders nearly unanimously opposed any removal of the YSO program, warning of slower response times for schools without a dedicated resource, this would also cause an increased risk in its absence, to include an increase potentially in arrests if patrol officers respond to schools based on a lack of available time.
- **Positive Impact on Students and Community:** YSOs are valued for building relationships and serving as mentors and problem-solvers for youth. When implemented well, YSO programs can foster a sense of security on campus and divert at-risk students from the justice system through early intervention and referral to mental health

resources, such as Washington County Mental Health Response Team (MHRT) support services. Effective programs have been linked to reductions in campus violence and even community juvenile crime, as seen in case studies (e.g., a 59% decrease in juvenile arrests in one community that emphasized prevention and mental health partnerships). [ocde.us](https://www.oecd.org/)

Recommendations: Based on these findings, this report recommends that the School Board **maintain and strengthen the YSO program** rather than eliminate it. Specific actions include the continuation of enhancing YSO training and role definitions, expanding preventive programs and mental health services, improving community engagement and oversight, and regularly evaluating program outcomes. By addressing identified gaps, the district can maximize the positive impact of YSOs on safety and student well-being while fostering trust across the school community. The detailed report below provides the complete analysis, supporting data, and recommended next steps for the Board's consideration.

Introduction

School safety and student well-being are top priorities for the Beaverton School District. In pursuit of these goals, the district has long partnered with local law enforcement through the School Resource Officer program – recently rebranded as the Youth Resource Officer (YSO) program – placing specially trained officers in schools. The YSOs serve multiple roles on campus: they respond to immediate security threats, build relationships with students, and act as liaisons between schools, families, and law enforcement. As of 2023, the district's school resource officer program had been in place for nearly 30 years adapting over time to changing community expectations and safety challenges (Miller, 2023).

In the wake of nationwide discussions about policing in schools, including racial justice considerations and calls for more significant mental health support, the Beaverton School Board has sought to ensure that the YSO program effectively serves all students. In 2021, an independent consultant report (SeeChange) was commissioned to review the program. That report found strong support for having officers in schools among parents (71%) and staff (66%) but lower support and awareness among students (only 43% of students in favor). It recommended clarifying the officers' roles, expanding mental health resources, and improving training and oversight. In response, the district enacted some changes – for example, renaming SROs to YSOs and drafting a more detailed intergovernmental agreement (IGA) outlining officer duties and required training. These steps addressed community concerns while preserving the safety benefits officers can provide on campus.

Given the ongoing importance and public interest in this issue, the Beaverton School District convened a Leadership Meeting on January 9, 2025, to conduct a **gap analysis** of the YSO program. This process gathered input from all building leaders – including principals, assistant principals, and district administrators – to evaluate how well the current YSO program meets our schools' needs and where gaps or opportunities for improvement exist. This report presents the results of that gap analysis. It is intended to inform the School Board's decisions by providing a research-driven, data-informed assessment of YSOs' value, their impact on school safety and climate, and recommendations for the program's future.

Methodology of the Gap Analysis

Approach: The gap analysis was conducted through a structured survey and collaborative discussion involving the district's building and district-level leadership. The survey was administered in early January and included quantitative and qualitative items. Leaders were

asked to rate several statements about YSO effectiveness on a scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 10 (Strongly Agree), rank the priority of various services YSOs provide, and respond to open-ended questions about strengths, concerns, and hypothetical scenarios (such as the removal of the YSO program). Approximately 120 leaders responded, representing perspectives from elementary, middle, and high schools to include options programs, and district departments.

Data Collection: The survey questions were designed to capture a comprehensive view of the YSO program's role. Key areas of inquiry included:

- **Current Services and Value:** What services do YSOs provide for student safety, building safety, and information sharing? What supports do YSOs offer that leaders value most? Leaders could list multiple services or examples in these categories, providing a broad inventory of YSO contributions. They were also asked to describe the YSO's role in a single word to distill the essence of how they see these officers (for example, "mentor," "protector," "critical," etc.).
- **Perceptions of Program Effectiveness:** Leaders rated statements about the necessity of YSOs for student safety, the impact of removing the program on student well-being, and whether alternative resources could effectively replace YSOs. These rating questions gauged the overall level of agreement or concern regarding YSO's effectiveness and potential trade-offs.
- **Impacts of Continuation vs Removal:** Open-ended prompts asked leaders to reflect on how their school would be impacted if the YSO program remained in place versus if it were removed. This helped surface anticipated outcomes, benefits, or challenges under each scenario, revealing beliefs about the program's importance.
- **Concerns and Additional Thoughts:** Lastly, respondents could share any additional thoughts, including concerns or suggestions, about the YSO program.

On Jan 9. Leaders engaged in dialogue to clarify their input and highlight priority issues. The combination of survey data and group discussion forms the basis of this analysis.

Analysis: The qualitative responses were analyzed for common themes and notable viewpoints. Frequently mentioned items were categorized (e.g., types of safety services provided by YSOs shared concerns about the program) to identify strengths and gaps. Quantitative ratings were summarized (e.g., calculating the percentage of leaders who agreed or disagreed with key statements) to provide an overall sense of the leadership's stance. In addition, the priority ranking of YSO services was aggregated to see which functions were deemed most critical across the district. Finally, these internal findings were compared against best practices and research findings from external sources to form data-driven conclusions and recommendations.

This gap analysis uses a mixed-methods approach—combining survey metrics with narrative feedback and external research—to ensure a thorough and balanced assessment of the YSO program's current state and areas for improvement. The following sections detail the key findings, interpret the data in a broader research context, and offer recommendations for the School Board's consideration.

Key Findings from the Survey and Gap Analysis

The input from administrators provides a clear picture of how YSOs are functioning in schools, what is working well, and where there are concerns or unmet needs. Below is a summary of the

major themes that emerged from the leaders' survey responses, divided into **strengths** of the YSO program and **concerns/gaps** that need attention:

Strengths and Contributions of YSOs

Wide Range of Safety Services: Administrators reported that YSOs contribute to many aspects of student and campus safety. Leaders listed services such as:

- **Student Welfare Checks and Support:** YSOs conduct wellness checks on students (e.g., home visits or check-ins for students facing challenges) and assist with issues like **child welfare concerns** or reports of abuse. They often partner with school counselors or social workers to ensure the safety of at-risk students.
- **Threat Assessment and Emergency Response:** YSOs play a key role on school threat assessment teams (often referred to as STAT) by evaluating potential threats (including social media) and helping develop safety plans. YSOs provide an immediate on-site law enforcement response in urgent situations like a weapon on campus, an intruder, or a credible violent threat. Administrators highly value this rapid response capability, noting that **having a trained officer on campus can dramatically reduce emergency response times** – a potentially life-saving difference. Leaders warned that without YSOs, “our safety response would slow *WAAAAAY* down,” putting students and staff at risk during critical incidents.
- **Law Enforcement Expertise for School Issues:** YSOs handle or assist with criminal matters on campus or involving students. Common examples include investigating **weapons or drug possession, assaults or fights, thefts, stalking or harassment incidents, and SafeOregon tip investigations** (SafeOregon is the statewide school safety tip line). By addressing these issues, YSOs help keep campuses secure and

follow up on serious disciplinary incidents. They also conduct **legal investigations (e.g., child abuse/neglect interviews or Title IX sexual assault investigations)** in

collaboration with school administration, ensuring proper procedures are followed.

Administrators see this as a crucial support; school staff alone may not have the training or authority to handle such cases effectively.

- **Visible Presence and Deterrence:** Many leaders cited the **positive presence** of YSOs on campus as a strength. YSOs patrol school property (including parking lots and nearby areas), help with traffic safety during busy drop-off and pick-up times, and attend major school events like athletic games, dances, and graduations. Their visibility can deter outsiders from attempting to trespass or commit crimes at school. It also helps remind students to behave safely (for instance, driving cautiously in school zones). One respondent described the YSO's presence as lending "calm, relationships, and [a] proactive **presence**," which reassures the school community.
- **Information Sharing and Prevention Programs:** Beyond reacting to incidents, YSOs contribute to preventive education and communication. Leaders noted that YSOs give presentations on safety topics (aligned with the new IGA, which calls for officer presentations on health and safety). They also share relevant information with schools – for example, providing briefings at staff meetings or school board meetings on community safety trends, contributing to newsletters, and updating administrators about local law enforcement concerns that could affect schools. This information flow helps schools stay ahead of potential issues and coordinate prevention efforts.

Relationship-Building and Student Support: Another strong theme was the **mentor and support role** that YSOs play. In the survey, when asked to describe YSOs in one word, leaders responded with terms like "mentor," "supporter," "guide," "protector," and "peacekeeper." This reflects that YSOs are not seen solely as enforcers but as partners in educating and caring for

students. Many administrators shared anecdotes of YSOs forming trusting relationships with students, especially those who may be struggling. For example, an officer providing a student with guidance, de-escalating a conflict, or even something as simple as offering encouragement and “hugs” was mentioned as highly valued.

These relationships can have tangible benefits for student well-being. Students with positive connections to a YSO may feel more comfortable reporting concerns (like bullying or threats) and more confident that adults at school are looking out for them. Several leaders highlighted that their YSO “knows our kids and our community,” implying that officers often become an integrated part of the school family. Research supports this relational approach: **when SROs/YSOs build trust with students and staff, it can contribute to a stronger sense of safety and a more positive school climate**. Indeed, national data show that a well-trained school officer’s presence can improve safety perceptions among students, teachers, and administrators. However, those perceptions can vary among different student groups (discussed further under concerns).

Critical Incident Management and Expertise: School leaders overwhelmingly appreciated having an on-site expert to consult for safety issues. Respondents mentioned that YSOs provide **credibility and reassurance** to the community when difficult situations arise. For instance, if there is a threat rumor or a lockdown, having a YSO involved helps communicate to parents that the school is responding thoroughly. One administrator wrote that the YSO’s authoritative presence is “not a hammer but gives us backbone,” meaning the officer’s involvement can deter misbehavior and give the school team confidence in handling crises. Additionally, YSOs often serve as advisors in emergency planning (such as drills and protocols) and as key members of crisis response teams for the district. This partnership ensures that the response is coordinated and swift in worst-case scenarios – from school shootings to natural disasters. Leaders felt this partnership is **essential for the proactive safety work** that keeps schools safe day-to-day.

Community Liaison and Trust Building: The YSO program also bridges the school district and the broader community. YSOs coordinate with local police and sheriff's offices, simplifying communications when outside help is needed. Some YSOs engage in community-building activities, like joining school events (one leader gave the example of an officer playing in a staff vs. students soccer game). These actions humanize the officers and foster positive interactions between youth and law enforcement. Administrators value how YSOs can **increase community trust in schools** – for instance, when families see officers and educators working together positively, it reinforces that both entities are united in keeping children safe. In some cases, YSOs even assist families directly: one respondent noted that when parents have a child-related issue and call the school, the YSO can help address it (such as by conducting a welfare check or advising on a legal matter). This kind of responsiveness strengthens family-school relationships.

The survey revealed that **school and district leaders view YSOs as indispensable contributors to a safe and supportive learning environment**. From preventing and responding to safety threats, mentoring students, and reinforcing positive behavior to bridging school and community efforts, the YSO program's strengths are multifaceted. These strengths align with best practices identified in the literature, which suggest that a well-implemented school-based officer program can help **prevent violence, connect at-risk youth with services, and create a secure school climate**. The following section will address the other side of the analysis – the identified concerns and gaps – to ensure a complete understanding of where the program can improve.

Concerns and Gaps Identified

While support for the YSO program was high, leaders did not hesitate to point out concerns and areas where the program could improve. The gap analysis highlighted several key issues:

1. Uneven Student Perceptions and Relationships: A recurring concern is that not all students benefit from having police officers on campus. **Some students – particularly students of color or those from communities with historical mistrust of law enforcement – may feel less safe or comfortable with an officer present.** Administrators acknowledged that, despite many positive relationships, a segment of the student population views YSOs with apprehension or fear. For example, one leader noted, *“our families are still not comfortable seeing [officers] in schools”*, indicating that an officer’s presence can be intimidating rather than reassuring for some. Broader data back this gap in perception: surveys have found that while a majority of students might feel safer with SROs, Black and Latino students are much less likely to share that feeling, often due to personal or community experiences with policing. If not addressed, these feelings can undermine the sense of safety and well-being the program will enhance.

To bridge this gap, leaders suggested that YSOs need to engage in more deliberate **relationship-building activities**, especially with students inclined to distrust them. At the elementary level, this could mean more informal interactions (reading to younger students, participating in recess or school clubs) so that children see the officer as a friendly helper. In secondary schools, YSOs might collaborate with student leadership groups or clubs (like Black Student Union or Gay-Straight Alliance) to listen to student concerns and demonstrate allyship. Building these connections can slowly change perceptions and ensure that *all* students, regardless of background, feel the YSO is there to protect and support them, not to police them punitively.

2. Need for Clear Role Definition – “Law Enforcement vs. School Discipline”: Many administrators stressed that YSOs should focus on **safety and crime prevention**, not routine disciplinary actions. There was a consensus that YSOs **should not be involved in minor school rule violations** (like dress code issues or minor classroom misbehavior) that can be handled by school staff. This aligns with widely accepted best practice: even at the federal level, experts agree it’s “not good for [police] to be getting involved in minor disciplinary matters.” The concern here is two-fold. First, involving YSOs in minor issues could unnecessarily criminalize student behavior – potentially contributing to a “school-to-prison pipeline” where students receive law enforcement contact or records for what are essentially school discipline issues. Second, it could stretch YSOs thin and detract from their ability to respond to real safety threats.

The gap analysis found that while our current YSO program generally understands these boundaries, there is **room for more explicit guidelines**. Leaders want **clear criteria on when to call in the YSO**. For instance, some districts use formal agreements or code-of-conduct matrices to delineate when an incident *must* involve law enforcement (e.g., a weapon, a credible violent threat, drug distribution) versus when it should be handled administratively. Ensuring our district policy and training materials reinforce these distinctions will help school staff and YSOs stay in their appropriate lanes. During the Jan 9 meeting, it was discussed that updating the district’s memorandum of understanding or IGA with law enforcement, if needed, could be a step to nail down these role definitions even further. This clarity will reduce confusion and prevent “mission creep,” where officers might inadvertently assume roles outside their purview.

3. Proactive vs. Reactive Services: A notable gap identified is the desire for the YSO program to be more **proactive in prevention and education**. Several leaders commented that much of the YSO’s time is spent reacting to issues or “putting out fires.” While their reactive work (responding to threats and investigating incidents) is critical, administrators see untapped potential for YSOs to get ahead of problems. For example, one respondent wrote, “*It is working*

as a response. Need more preventive [work].” Another mentioned wanting more opportunities for YSOs to connect with students in non-crisis situations so that intervention can happen **before** an issue escalates (especially at the elementary level, where early positive intervention can pay dividends later).

The gap analysis suggests expanding YSO involvement in **preventive initiatives**: this could include delivering safety workshops (on topics like digital citizenship to prevent cyberbullying and online threats or substance abuse prevention), collaborating with counselors on restorative practices, or identifying at-risk students who might benefit from mentorship *before* they make harmful choices. By having YSOs spend a portion of their schedule on such proactive outreach, the program can shift from being only a “reactive force” to an integral part of the school’s preventative safety net. Leaders believe this will reduce incidents and improve the reputation of YSOs as caring resources, not just enforcers.

4. Resource Limitations – Coverage and Support Staff: Another gap area is ensuring adequate resources to meet the safety needs of all schools. Some administrators expressed concern that **there are insufficient YSOs to cover every need**. In a large district, a limited number of officers must split time among multiple campuses or respond to incidents across town, which can lead to delays for some schools. *“We need more SROs,”* one leader plainly stated, suggesting that increasing the number of officers (or their hours in schools) could enhance security and support. While adding officers is ultimately a budgetary and staffing decision involving our law enforcement partners, the feedback indicates schools feel the demand for the current YSO team is very high. For instance, if one YSO is involved in an investigation at a high school, an elementary school might temporarily be without nearby officer support.

In addition to officer coverage, leaders emphasized the importance of **supporting roles like counselors, psychologists, and social workers** who work alongside YSOs. The survey comments echoed the SeeChange report's recommendation that expanding mental and behavioral health services is critical. **YSOs are most effective when they are part of a broader support network rather than the sole responders to student crises.** Suppose a student is experiencing a mental health crisis, for example. In that case, an ideal scenario might involve both the YSO (to ensure immediate safety if the student is a danger to self or others) and a school counselor or crisis worker (to de-escalate and provide psychological support). Leaders worry that if mental health staffing is insufficient, YSOs may end up handling situations that require counseling expertise – which is not the optimal approach and could lead to adverse outcomes. Thus, one gap is the need for continued investment in *complementary personnel and programs* so that YSOs can be used appropriately and effectively. The YSO program's success is intertwined with the strength of the district's student services.

5. Training and Consistency: Finally, the analysis identified gaps related to how officers are trained and how consistently the program is implemented across different schools. The district works with multiple law enforcement agencies (e.g., Beaverton Police, Washington County Sheriff's Office), and historically, each officer's approach might differ based on their background or training. Some leaders noted variations – for instance, one comment suggested a wish that “[Washington County] was more like Beaverton police,” implying that the style or protocols might not be uniform. This indicates a **need for standardized training and expectations** for all YSOs, regardless of their agency. The new IGA draft already moves in this direction by outlining specific training requirements (such as training in adolescent development, de-escalation, and bias awareness). The gap analysis strongly supports these requirements, highlighting that **ongoing professional development** is needed so that YSOs are equipped to fulfill their role as quasi-educators and mentors in addition to law enforcers. Regular joint training with school

administrators could also improve understanding on both sides (officers and principals learning to work together under shared guidelines).

Furthermore, **data collection and oversight** were mentioned as areas for improvement. To ensure the program meets its goals and does not inadvertently cause harm, the district should track the number of incidents involving YSO intervention, types of incidents, outcomes (e.g., referrals to counseling vs. citations or arrests), and feedback from students and parents. The Beaverton Human Rights Advisory Commission and other community stakeholders have called for more transparency and reporting on YSO activities. Consistent data will allow the School Board and district leadership to monitor the program's impact (for example, ensuring no disproportionate disciplinary impacts on certain student groups and that positive interventions are increasing). This kind of oversight mechanism is currently in a gap, as was noted by community members who feel prior recommendations haven't been fully implemented.

In conclusion, the concerns and gaps identified do not negate the strengths of the YSO program, but they do illustrate important **areas for growth**. Addressing these concerns – improving student relations, clarifying roles, bolstering prevention, ensuring adequate resources, and strengthening training and accountability – will be critical to evolving the YSO program to its best possible version. The following section will integrate these findings with data-driven analysis from research and other districts' experiences to further elucidate the effectiveness of YSOs and inform potential solutions.

Data-Driven Analysis: Effectiveness of YSOs and Best Practices

Reviewing what research says about school resource officers (or youth resource officers) and how similar programs have fared elsewhere is essential to place the Beaverton findings in context. **The effectiveness of YSOs can be measured in multiple ways** – their impact on harder safety outcomes (like crime or violence in schools), softer outcomes (like students' feelings of safety and well-being), and school-community relations. Studies over the past decade show **mixed results**, highlighting that outcomes largely depend on how the program is implemented. Below is a summary of relevant data and case studies:

Impact on School Safety (Crime and Violence):

- **Preventing Violence and Crime:** There is evidence that the presence of school-based officers can *reduce certain types of school violence and deter criminal behavior*. For example, a recent [RAND](#) review of research found that having an SRO on campus was associated with **increased detection of weapons and drug offenses and a decrease in some violent incidents...** In other words, officers can catch problems that might otherwise go unnoticed and intervene in potentially dangerous situations, thereby keeping weapons or drugs out of schools and reducing fights or assaults. Similarly, a study of North Carolina schools found that adding SROs led to fewer instances of severe violence (like fights and attacks) in schools. These findings support what our administrators have expressed anecdotally – that YSOs make schools safer by handling high-risk situations quickly and effectively.
- **Limitations and Unintended Consequences:** However, [research](#) also cautions that an officer's presence may inadvertently lead to more student offenses being handled by law enforcement that school officials might have dealt with informally. Multiple studies have shown that schools with officers report higher **suspensions, expulsions, and arrests** for student misbehavior. Importantly, this doesn't necessarily mean the school became less safe; it could mean that misbehavior that used to be addressed with school

discipline (like a fight resulting in suspension) might now involve a disorderly conduct charge or referral to juvenile justice. This dynamic has raised concerns about the “**school-to-prison pipeline**,” where student misconduct results in criminal records. Our YSO survey reflects awareness of this issue, so leaders are keen to keep YSOs focused only on actual safety threats. The goal is to harness the safety benefits of YSOs while **minimizing law enforcement involvement in routine discipline**, thereby avoiding unnecessary criminalization of youth.

- **Disproportionality:** A consistent [research](#) finding is that **students of color are more likely to be affected by harsh discipline and arrests in schools with officers**.

Factors contributing to this may include implicit bias or systemic issues; regardless, it’s a critical point for equity. If YSO programs are not managed carefully, they could exacerbate racial disparities in discipline. Thus, best practice calls for robust training in cultural competency and bias, clear policies to guard against differential treatment and regular data review by race/ethnicity. The SeeChange report and community feedback in Beaverton also flagged this, which is why improvements in training and oversight are part of our recommendations.

Impact on Students’ Feelings of Safety and Well-being:

- **Feeling Safer vs. Feeling Anxious:** Students and staff often report feeling safer when a trusted officer is present on campus, especially in the wake of high-profile school violence incidents. A 2020 [analysis](#) of national data noted that **a majority of students do feel safer with police in schools**, and teachers and administrators also often appreciate the added security. This aligns with the sentiment of our district’s leaders and many parents who support YSOs. The psychological reassurance of having an officer can reduce anxiety about potential threats. In contrast, some students, as discussed, feel *less safe* – either because they personally fear the police or because the presence

of an officer reminds them of violence (a paradox where the solution reminds them of the problem). For instance, in Beaverton's 2022 [survey](#), less than half of students supported having officers, with many undecided or against. Nationwide, Black students, in particular report lower levels of comfort; this discrepancy can impact their sense of belonging at school.

- **Building Trust and Support:** The research suggests that the key to positive student well-being outcomes is how well officers integrate into the school culture. When YSOs take on roles as **educators and informal counselors**, not just enforcers, students are more likely to view them as supportive adults rather than adversaries. The U.S. Department of Justice and the National Association of School Resource Officers promote a “triad” model where SROs serve as **law enforcers, e**
- **ducators, and mentors.** Effective YSOs teach or co-teach lessons (on legal issues and safety, or even serve as guest speakers in history or government classes) and counsel students (listening to their concerns, giving advice, and steering them to help). When students have positive interactions, their overall stress can be reduced, knowing they have another caring adult to turn to. Some qualitative [studies](#) have found that in schools where officers prioritized relationship-building, students described them as “another counselor” or a trustworthy mentor rather than a scary cop. Our local data provided examples: e.g., a student who might have been headed for trouble but was guided by a YSO onto a better path or an incident where a YSO's rapport with a student helped peacefully defuse a potentially dangerous conflict. These outcomes are more challenging to measure but central to student well-being.
- **Mental Health and Diversion Programs:** One of the most promising areas linking YSOs to student well-being is when they participate in diversion and intervention programs. The Cambridge, MA “Safety Net” Collaborative is a notable case. In this model, YSOs work in tandem with mental health professionals and youth counselors to

identify youths at risk of entering the juvenile justice system and intervene early.

Cambridge [reported](#) a **59% drop in juvenile arrests for criminal offenses** after implementing this collaborative YSO approach, indicating that many students who would have been arrested were diverted to supportive programs instead. Additionally, a [study](#) of the Cambridge Safety Net program showed improved access to mental health services for youth who went through diversion (e.g., increased use of outpatient counseling). This evidence underscores that YSOs can be leveraged to **connect students with help rather than punishment**, if structured correctly. Beaverton's YSOs already partake in some multidisciplinary teams (like threat assessment teams that include counselors and administrators), but expanding formal diversion partnerships (for example, with county juvenile services or community agencies) could similarly benefit student well-being here.

Impact on Community Relations:

- **Stakeholder Support:** Police presence in schools has been a contentious topic in many communities. However, surveys in Beaverton and elsewhere indicate that parents and school staff **strongly support SRO/YSO programs**. In contrast, community activists and some students call for reforms. Our district's commissioned [survey](#) found roughly 70% of parents in favor. National [polls](#) likewise often show parents favor having an officer for protection in the era of school shootings. This support is usually rooted in fear of extreme violence and a desire for a quick response. At the same time, civil rights organizations and some student groups urge limiting or removing police from schools to invest in counseling instead. The gap analysis meeting acknowledged these community tensions. For the School Board, maintaining community trust means listening to both sides: those who feel assured by YSOs and those who feel anxious. A data-driven

approach would communicate transparently about what YSOs do, how they contribute to safety, and what safeguards are in place to prevent adverse outcomes.

- **Officer-Youth Relationships and Public Perception:** When YSOs succeed in building positive relationships with students, it can have ripple effects in the community. Students who have had mentorship from an officer may share those positive experiences with their families, helping to break down stereotypes or fears about police. Over time, this can improve police-community relations beyond the school walls. For example, if a student trusts the YSO at school, that trust might extend to law enforcement, potentially leading to better cooperation or communication in the neighborhood. There are documented “success stories,” often highlighted by organizations like [NASRO](#), where an SRO’s actions (such as peacefully resolving a dangerous situation with a student in crisis) not only averted harm but also **built goodwill** in the community. Conversely, adverse incidents (such as an officer using aggressive tactics on a student) can spark community outrage and erode trust. The data here is mainly anecdotal, but it reinforces that the **selection and training of YSOs is crucial** – the right officer can become a beloved figure in the community, whereas the wrong approach can cause controversy.
- **Training and Oversight Practices:** Best practices from various districts and consensus reports emphasize a few strategies to maximize positive impact:
 - **Careful Selection of Officers:** [Agencies](#) should assign officers who want to work with youth and have the right temperament (patient, compassionate, and culturally sensitive). These officers should be vetted in collaboration with the school district.
 - **Specialized [Training](#):** Officers need training in adolescent psychology, de-escalation techniques, restorative justice, and anti-bias principles. For instance, training on disabilities (like how to approach a student with autism, as

highlighted in a local case where an incident led to an unintended juvenile record) can prevent missteps.

- **Defined Roles & MOUs:** A formal agreement (MOU/IGA) that defines the scope of the YSO's duties helps manage expectations. For example, Beaverton's proposed IGA specifies that officers will respond mainly to extreme violence and give safety presentations. As recommended by national frameworks, clear policies guide when schools should involve YSOs and when not. This structure protects student rights and focuses the officers on appropriate tasks.
- **Data Collection & Continuous Improvement:** Successful programs establish metrics (e.g., response times, incident outcomes, student/parent satisfaction) and review them regularly. If data show disparities or issues, they adjust practices. Community advisory councils or task forces can also provide oversight and feedback.

In evaluating the **effectiveness of YSOs**, it becomes apparent that **the program's value is maximized when it adheres to best practices and is coupled with other support systems**.

YSOs are not a standalone solution for all safety concerns but a vital component of a holistic school safety strategy. Research and case studies suggest that when YSO programs are well-designed – with the right people, training, and focus on prevention – they can indeed simultaneously improve safety outcomes and student well-being. In contrast, poorly implemented programs (with unclear roles or inadequate training) risk doing more harm than good.

The findings from our district's gap analysis align with these lessons. Our leaders' insights echo what the data shows: YSOs are highly beneficial for handling serious safety matters and can positively influence students, but we must address issues of perception, role creep, and

resource balance to avoid pitfalls. The final section of this report will translate these conclusions into actionable recommendations for the School Board.

Recommendations for the School Board

Based on the combined insights from the Beaverton leadership survey and broader research, this report recommends a series of actions to strengthen the YSO program and address the identified gaps. The overarching goal is to **maintain the valuable safety benefits of YSOs while improving the program's equity, transparency, and alignment with student well-being goals**. Below are the key recommendations:

1. Continue and Affirm the YSO Program with Reforms:

The School Board should affirm its commitment to keeping YSOs in schools, as the gap analysis indicates that removal would create significant safety and response gaps. However, this continuation must go hand-in-hand with reforms. The Board should formally adopt a stance recognizing **YSOs as essential to student safety** (consistent with the ~95% of leaders who agreed) and simultaneously commit to implementing changes that address concerns (community relations, role clarity, etc.). This balanced message will reassure staff and parents that safety remains a priority while acknowledging student and community voices calling for improvement.

2. Strengthen the YSO Role Definition and Policies:

Work with district administration and law enforcement partners to **clarify the role of YSOs in writing**, possibly via an updated Intergovernmental Agreement or Board policy. The policy should explicitly state that YSOs are on campus to handle serious safety and law violations (threats of violence, weapons, significant criminal acts) and **not to administer school**

discipline for minor infractions. It should outline clear **criteria for when school staff should request YSO involvement**, including life-threatening emergencies, urgent safety threats, or criminal conduct that poses harm. For non-emergency situations, establish protocols (e.g., consultation with an administrator first) to ensure appropriate calling in the YSO. By solidifying these guidelines, staff, and officers will have a shared understanding, reducing the chance of overreach. Communicate these boundaries to all school personnel (perhaps through training or a memo), so teachers and front-office staff also know when it is or isn't appropriate to involve the YSO. This recommendation aligns with best practices and will help prevent the escalation of minor issues to law enforcement matters.

3. Invest in Targeted Training and Professional Development:

The Board should ensure funding and support for comprehensive **training for all YSOs and the administrators who work with them.** Training topics should include de-escalation techniques, adolescent development, trauma-informed approaches, cultural competency and implicit bias, disability awareness, and restorative justice practices. Such training will equip YSOs to be effective in school and address the concern that some student groups feel targeted or misunderstood. We recommend joint workshops where YSOs and school administrators train together on scenarios to build teamwork and clarify roles in practice. Additionally, training should be ongoing (annual refreshers) rather than one-time. The Board can direct the Superintendent to collaborate with local law enforcement agencies to verify that assigned YSOs meet these training standards (and make it part of the MOU that only officers who have completed specific school-based training can be assigned). This step is crucial to implement the spirit of the recommendations from both our leaders and the 2022 consultant report, ensuring officers know to act as mentors and educators, not just enforcers.

4. Enhance Preventive and Educational Programming:

Shift the YSO program toward a more proactive stance by formalizing YSO involvement in

prevention programs. The Board could encourage the development of a yearly plan for YSOs that includes a set number of preventive activities per month (for example, teaching safety classes, running a student crime prevention club, or organizing informational assemblies). YSOs could partner with health teachers or counselors to address topics like bullying, mental health awareness, substance abuse, and digital safety. Moreover, establish **regular relationship-building opportunities**: YSOs should be introduced to students at the start of the year (e.g., at grade-level meetings) with an emphasis on their supportive role and encouraged to engage in informal positive interactions (having lunch with students, attending school games in a supportive capacity, etc.). These efforts will help students see YSOs as approachable and caring. The Board might allocate resources or time for YSOs to receive training in delivering such programs (some may not naturally know how to “teach” a class, so training via NASRO or similar organizations on the SRO triad model could help). The district can address the gap in the program’s feeling too reactive by making prevention a core part of the YSO’s job. The success of this recommendation can be measured by tracking activities (e.g., number of presentations given, students reached) and perhaps surveying students annually on their perceptions of safety and the YSOs.

5. Expand Mental Health and Counseling Support (Integrated Approach):

As part of the safety and well-being strategy, the Board should continue increasing investment in mental health professionals in schools and ensure YSOs work with them. This means having sufficient counselors, school psychologists, and social workers so that when incidents involving mental health or social issues arise, *those* experts are available to lead the response with YSO backup as needed. One actionable step is to create **multidisciplinary teams** at each secondary school (if not already in place) consisting of the YSO, a counselor, an administrator, and a social worker who meet regularly to review at-risk students or situations. This echoes the Cambridge Safety Net model, aiming to intervene early and connect youth with services instead

of the justice system. The Board could advocate for county support in this integrated approach – for example, asking the county mental health department to dedicate a liaison to work with our YSOs for high-risk cases. By bolstering mental health resources, the district ensures YSOs are not the only resource to handle complex student needs, thereby reducing the burden on officers and likely leading to better student outcomes (since underlying issues like trauma or illness are addressed). In budget terms, this might mean funding additional counseling positions or reallocating some safety budget to training joint intervention teams. The payoff is a more holistic safety net that addresses the root causes of student crises, not just the symptoms.

6. Increase YSO Program Transparency and Accountability:

To maintain public trust, the Board should implement a framework for **regularly reviewing YSO program data and community feedback**. We recommend that the Superintendent provide an **annual YSO Program Report** to the School Board (and make it public), which could include number of incidents YSOs responded to (categorized by type), number of arrests or law enforcement actions taken on campus, number of preventative activities completed, results of any student/parent/staff surveys about the program, and training updates. Additionally, data should be disaggregated by student demographics to monitor equity. This transparency will show the community that the district is carefully tracking the program's impact – for example, if the data show low arrests and mostly preventative interactions, that can counter the narrative that YSOs are criminalizing schoolchildren. Conversely, if any concerning trends appear, they can be addressed promptly with policy or practice adjustments.

The Board might also consider forming a **stakeholder advisory group** or leveraging existing committees (such as a School Safety Committee or the Beaverton Safe Schools Alliance if one exists) to review the YSO program and suggest improvements periodically. This group could include school administrators, a teacher, a parent, a student, a representative from the police, and perhaps a member of the Human Rights Advisory Commission. Such a group would

provide diverse perspectives and keep lines of communication open, further building community trust. The district demonstrates accountability by instituting oversight and feedback loops, which is particularly important given prior community concerns that recommendations were not fully acted upon.

7. Ensure Adequate YSO Staffing and Equitable Coverage:

Finally, in partnership with law enforcement, the Board should evaluate whether the current number of YSOs and their deployment is sufficient. If certain schools or regions have less coverage (for instance, if many elementary schools share one YSO), consider negotiating for additional officer support or reassigning resources to high-need areas. This might involve budgeting for additional contract hours or finding creative solutions like having rotating “on-call” YSO support for smaller schools. The survey feedback suggests that principals desire more presence; thus, incremental increases (like an officer visiting each elementary school weekly rather than bi-weekly) could make a difference in visibility and response. Any expansion should be weighed against budget and the ability to maintain quality (it is better to have fewer well-trained officers than many without proper training). However, if the district invests more in safety personnel, adding YSO capacity is one option to consider alongside other measures (like security technology or more campus supervisors). An analysis of incident data can inform this decision – if certain schools have frequent safety incidents, they may justify a dedicated YSO. The Board’s support in advocating for these resources with city/county partners will be necessary, since ultimately, police agencies assign the officers.

By implementing these recommendations, the School Board can help evolve the YSO program into a model of best practice. The focus is on **maximizing safety and positive student relationships while minimizing risks of over-policing or inequity. Many of these steps (clear roles, training, prevention, oversight) are interlocking pieces—together, they ensure that YSOs are used in the right ways and supported by the right systems.**

Conclusion and Next Steps

The gap analysis conducted with our building and district leaders underscores a clear message:

Youth Resource Officers are a valuable asset to the Beaverton School District when adequately utilized. The program has strong support among those who work most closely with it – our principals and administrators – who witness daily the contributions YSOs make to keeping our schools safe and our students supported. From quick emergency responses that may prevent tragedies to the mentorship and kindness officers show students, the YSO program's benefits to safety, student well-being, and community rapport are significant. These findings align with broader evidence that well-implemented school officer programs can enhance safety and even reduce serious incidents on campus.

However, the analysis also illuminated critical areas where the program should improve. Concerns about student perceptions, the importance of focusing on serious threats (and not minor discipline), and the need for more prevention and coordination with mental health resources are all areas that the district must address moving forward. These are not insurmountable challenges; on the contrary, they represent an opportunity to refine the YSO program to embody the best of what such a partnership can offer. By adopting the recommendations in this report, the School Board can ensure that our YSO program keeps pace with community expectations and national best practices, thereby **filling the gaps identified and strengthening the program's overall effectiveness.**

Next Steps:

Following the acceptance of this report, the following steps would be:

1. **Board Deliberation and Policy Direction:** The School Board should discuss these findings and determine policy directives (e.g., instruct the Superintendent to renegotiate

the YSO agreement with specific provisions or update district policy on police involvement in schools). A Board resolution affirming support for YSOs and the expectation of the outlined reforms could be a powerful way to codify the district's direction.

2. **Implementation Plan:** The Superintendent's Office, in collaboration with relevant departments (Student Services, Safety, and School Leadership) and law enforcement partners, should develop a concrete implementation plan for the recommendations. This plan should include timelines – for instance, “By Fall 2025, all YSOs will have completed enhanced training modules; by Spring 2026, data tracking systems will be in place for quarterly reports,” etc. It should also assign responsibilities (who will organize training, who will draft the MOU changes, etc.).
3. **Stakeholder Communication:** As changes are rolled out, communicate with stakeholders. Inform students, staff, and parents about the evolving YSO program. Emphasize the positive changes: more safety education, clarity that officers are there for protection, not punishment, increased transparency, etc. This communication can improve community buy-in and alleviate concerns. For example, if a segment of the community is worried about policing in schools, showing that the district is implementing measures like bias training, clear role limits, and oversight may help build trust that the program is being handled responsibly.
4. **Monitoring and Feedback:** Establish the recommended oversight mechanisms promptly. If an advisory group or committee is to be involved, identify members and set meeting schedules. Ensure the first annual (or biannual) YSO program report is scheduled – perhaps the first could be an update to the Board at the end of the next school year to report progress on these changes and any early data on outcomes.
5. **Continuous Improvement:** Treat the YSO program as a dynamic part of the district's approach to safety. Regularly incorporate new research findings or community feedback.

For instance, if new state guidelines on SROs are issued or if data shows a need to adjust strategies, be ready to do so. The Board might request a more comprehensive program review every few years to ensure it remains aligned with district values and goals.

In closing, the safety and well-being of students is a collective responsibility. YSOs, when integrated thoughtfully into our schools, are a critical component of that responsibility – **they are not a panacea. Still, they are a force multiplier** for a safe educational environment. By approving the recommendations in this report and supporting their implementation, the School Board will be taking proactive steps to ensure that every student in Beaverton School District can learn in a setting that is not only physically safe but also welcoming and supportive. The data and voices from our leadership team strongly suggest that this balanced approach – sustaining the YSO program with strategic improvements – is the right path forward. We strive for a model where YSOs are seen by all as **guardians and mentors** in our schools, helping every child to feel safe, valued, and able to thrive.

The Board's guidance and oversight will be crucial in this process. With clear direction and continued collaboration between the district, law enforcement, and the community, Beaverton can set a positive example of how to ensure school safety to uplift student well-being and public trust.

Appendix A

Table 1:

Top Services Provided by YSOs for Student Safety

| Rank | Service Provided |
|------|------------------------------------|
| 1 | Wellness checks on students |
| 2 | Home visits |
| 3 | Access to weapons investigations |
| 4 | Social media threat investigations |
| 5 | Family support interventions |

Table 2:

Descriptive Roles of YSOs (Summarized)

| Frequency | Descriptor |
|-----------|----------------------------|
| High | Mentor, Supporter, Partner |
| Moderate | Critical, Protector, Guide |
| Low | Enforcer, Counselor |

Table 3:

Services Provided by YSOs for Building and Community Safety

| Rank | Service Provided |
|------|--------------------------------|
| 1 | Campus intruder response |
| 2 | Traffic patrol and supervision |
| 3 | Safe Oregon tip line support |
| 4 | Hate/bias crimes investigation |
| 5 | Visible presence during events |

Table 4:

Most Valued Supports from YSOs

| Rank | Type of Support |
|------|--|
| 1 | Partnership in ensuring safety |
| 2 | Credibility and reassurance |
| 3 | Emotional support to students (e.g., comfort, reassurance) |
| 4 | Administrative support (crisis management assistance) |
| 5 | Authoritative yet non-threatening presence |

Table 5:

Potential Impact of Removing YSOs (Leader Responses)

| Frequency | Potential Impacts |
|-----------|--|
| High | Decreased emergency response speed |
| High | Negative impact on the emotional well-being of students |
| Moderate | Reduced proactive safety measures |
| Moderate | Increased use of personnel not adequately trained for crisis |
| Low | Uncertainty regarding district liability |