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School Resource Officers in Missouri Public Schools:
School Safety and Academic Success

by

John W. Link

October 25, 2010

A Dissertation submitted to the Education Faculty of Lindenwood University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education

School of Education

School Resource Officers in Missouri Public Schools:

School Safety and Academic Success

by

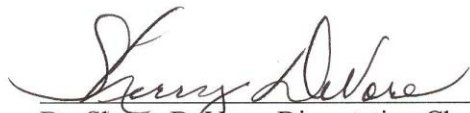
John W. Link

This Dissertation has been approved as partial fulfillment

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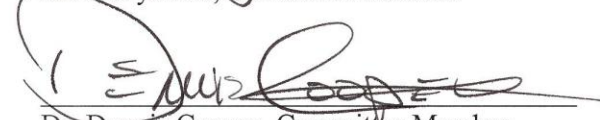
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Dr. Dennis Cooper, Committee Member

10-25-2010
Date

Declaration of Originality

I do hereby declare and attest to the fact that this is an original study based solely upon my own scholarly work at Lindenwood University and that I have not submitted it for any other college or university course or degree.

Full Legal Name: John W. Link

Signature: John W. Link Date: 10-25-2010

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Abstract

This study was designed to explore the relationship between the presence of a school resource officer and a safe school climate, as well as, increased student achievement. Additionally, the perceptions of public school superintendents regarding the impact of school resource officers on safe school climate and academic success were investigated using the Correlates of Effective Schools as a framework. The research was divided into sections to observe two sets of data. Section I included an examination of Missouri school districts with a student population of 2,000 or less, comparing 20 schools with school resource officers to 20 schools without school resource officers. Districts were compared using data collected from the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Variables considered in each district were: number of annual performance report standards met, attendance rate, dropout rate, graduation rate, cumulative ACT scores, and number of disciplinary incidents resulting in 10 or more days out-of-school suspensions. Section II consisted of a descriptive study of 260 Missouri school superintendents in districts with student populations of 2,000 or less. Based on the survey responses, there was no statistical difference between schools with resource officers and schools without resource officers, regarding academic achievement; however, 63% of school superintendents reported the presence of a school resource officer in their schools positively impacted student climate and student achievement.

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Chapter One - Introduction

As reported by McNicholas (2008), “school resource officers have been around for some time” (para. 1). Although, prior to the 1950s, school resource officers were seldom found working in public school buildings (Tilley, n.d.). During this time, educators’ interactions with law enforcement were primarily limited to discussions about traffic safety and child welfare (Tilley, n.d.).

The first school resource officer program was established in 1953, in Flint, Michigan (Mulqueen & Connie, as cited in McNicholas, 2008). This program was initiated to improve the relationships between the youth of that city and local law enforcement officers (Tilley, n.d.). By placing uniformed law enforcement officers in the school setting full time, schools and communities believed they could improve relationships between students and police officers (McNicholas, 2008).

As school resource officer programs began to gain popularity, the needs of school districts changed. School resource officer programs became an avenue for schools and communities to establish positive relationships (Monroe County Sheriff’s Office, 2009). With these programs in place, situations within the community were able to be addressed in a less threatening manner (Monroe County Sheriff’s Office, 2009). Schools, communities, and the youth formed teams to proactively solve issues prior to involvement by the local juvenile system (Monroe County Sheriff’s Office, 2009).

The roles of school resource officers were changed to a more security and safety focused approach following the tragedies at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, and Virginia Tech University (Calefati, 2009). These two incidents combined with the Jonesboro, Arkansas, school shooting, played a key role in the extensive

appointment of police officers into public schools during the 1990s (Wrightslaw, 2010). Calefati (2009), reported, “since these tragedies, lines of communication have since been established by schools and communities that: 1) allow students to report alarming behavior; 2) increase and update security systems; and 3) develop safe school plans, or crisis plans” (p. 2). In most school settings, school resource officers have been charged with commanding these systems of security and are accountable for safety coordination, training, and disaster preparedness (Calefati, 2009).

From the 1950s to the more current times of tragedy and trauma, school resource officers have evolved into an important part of schools and communities throughout the United States (Tilley, n.d.). School resource officers are, in fact, certified police officers assigned to serve and protect our children (Tilley, n.d.). As the world surrounding education and schools change, the need for school safety becomes a high priority. No school is safe from random and unforeseen acts of madness (Friedland, 1999). To counter violent acts, schools have intensified security measures to maintain a school climate and culture that will promote higher academic standards and reduce juvenile delinquency (Friedland, 1999).

Conceptual Underpinnings for the Study

The presence of armed police officers in the halls of school buildings signifies different concepts to different people (Walker, 2006). To the faculty, staff, and student body, a school resource officer may suggest a safe environment, which is conducive to learning. To the surrounding community, the presence of a school resource officer may indicate a commitment to violence prevention and school safety by the school district (Walker, 2006).

Hernandez and Susan (2004) reported that, “school violence not only creates a climate of fear and emotional unrest, it is also an obstacle within the learning process” (para. 1). Furthermore, as stated by Morrison, Placier, Levitch, Zhang, Lambert, and Pearce (2008), “in any society, schools are the means by which children are prepared to become successful adults” (para. 1). School resource officer programs are developed to provide a safe-school environment conducive to learning which is free from violent behaviors for students and teachers (Riverside Department of Public Safety, 2010). According to a study on safety and bullying prevention, conducted by the Student Wellbeing Branch (2006), safe schools are effective schools; therefore, the Correlates of Effective Schools (Lezotte, 1991), were chosen as the framework to examine the impact of school resource officers in public high schools in Missouri.

Research concerning the basic frameworks of school improvement, conducted by Lezotte (1991), has been used as a guide to transform schools into learning for all environments, or effective schools. Earlier studies, as reported in the archived article, *The History of the Effective Schools Movement* (Donnelley & Lee Library Archives & Special Collection, 1995), explained that Edmonds, and his colleagues, “convinced those in the field of education that schools could be reformed” (para.2), which helped to establish the effective schools movement of the late seventies. This concept allowed groups of educators and citizens to establish public forums intended to improve public school reform, which later transformed into the Second Generation Seven Correlates of an Effective School, as established by Lezotte (Donnelley & Lee Library Archives & Special Collection, 1995).

The Correlates of Effective Schools, as identified by Lezotte (1991), are:

- Safe and orderly climate.
- Clearly stated and focused mission.
- Instructional leadership.
- High expectations for all.
- Frequent monitoring of student progress.
- Maximizing learning opportunities.
- Positive communications between school, home, and community. (p.1)

Lezotte's (1991) work, combined with earlier research conducted by Edmonds and his colleagues, helped to transform schools from institutions of learning to institutions of safe and effective educational environments.

According to Kennedy (2004), "one of the most critical roles that school administrators face is to provide an educational setting conducive to learning" (para. 1). If a school is found to be unsafe, one will find students focusing on safety instead of academic success (Kennedy, 2004). The presence of a school resource officer allows for schools and students to achieve levels of academic success and school effectiveness by providing: (a) a safe and orderly environment; (b) maximized learning opportunities; and (c) positive communication between the school and home (Kennedy, 2004).

Statement of the Problem

There have been numerous studies on the effectiveness of school resource officers concerning school safety and violence prevention. According to Stephens (as cited in Mabie, 2003), Executive Director of the National School Safety Center:

A safe school is a place where the business of education can be conducted in a welcoming environment free of intimidation, violence, and fear. Such a setting provides an educational climate that fosters a spirit of acceptance and care for every student. (para. 6)

As observed in the White paper entitled, *The School Climate Challenge* (2007), “school climate either promotes or complicates students’ abilities to learn and achieve academically” (p. 6). Furthermore, “when students feel safe, cared for, appropriately supported, and lovingly pushed to learn, academic achievement should increase” (National School Climate Center - Center for Social and Emotional Education [NSCC-CSEE], 2007, p. 6). However, research is limited concerning the impact of a school resource officer to improving school safety and increasing academic success (Boyd, 2004).

Public education is ever-changing and has experienced dramatic modifications in recent years, such as high stakes testing, improved curriculum and instruction, school choice, charter schools, the No Child Left Behind Act, safe school initiatives, and an increase in English as Second Learners’ programs (Burrell, 2008). With educational and instructional guiding principles changing, educators and school resource officers have found that becoming educationally flexible enhances their ability to meet the needs of all students, academically and physically (Mabie, 2003). Research supports that unsafe environments and inadequate facilities make teaching and learning more difficult, which requires the flexibility of administrators and resource officers in prioritizing the needs of the school district (Hebert, 2007). Delisio (2005) determined school resource officers, considering all of their roles and responsibilities have a positive impact on school safety.

Therefore, the overarching question becomes: Does the presence of a school resource officer have an impact on academic success?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to garner the perceptions of school superintendents regarding the impact of school resource officers on school climate; school safety, including student discipline; and relationships developed between school, home, and community. Additionally, the relationship between school resource officers, safe school environments, and student achievement was explored.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What relationship exists between the presence of a school resource officer, as related to school safety and academic success?
2. What is the perception of school superintendents regarding the impact of school resource officers and: a) the overall school climate, b) the sense of safety within the school building, c) communications between home, school, and community?

Significance of the Study

This study will contribute to the understanding of school resource officer programs, the resource officer's role in creating a safe school climate, and the effect a resource officer has on student achievement. Walker (2006) reported:

If students attend schools that are considered safe environments, where academic chances can be taken, the likelihood is strong that achievement levels will be higher than if students are in an environment that is stressful and unsafe. (p. 2)

Despite nationwide initiatives of police presence in schools and a decrease in school crime and violence, “a relatively high and increasing number of students report feeling unsafe in school” (Brady, Balmer, & Phenix, 2007, p.1).

In response, school administrators and school communities continue to employ school and police partnerships, to deter violent activities and protect instructional opportunities (Brady et al., 2007). Research concerning school resource officers continues to be primarily focused on school violence and safety awareness. Therefore, the findings from this study may lead to a better understanding of how a school resource officer impacts a safe school environment, in an effort to increase student achievement.

Limitations of the Study

Before the data were collected, the following limitations were identified:

1. The number of active school resource officer programs in Missouri school districts with a student population of 2,000 students or less may be limited.
2. The amount of discipline and academic data available may limit the analysis of the research.
3. District personnel completing the survey may not be consistent.

Summary

From the school resource officer programs of Flint, Michigan, in the early 1950s (Tilley, n.d.) to the violence prevention and school climate issues of the 21st century, school resource officers have assumed a key role in the protection of the overall academic environment (Brockman & Russell, 2009). Research that directly supports the findings of academic achievement, as related to school resource officers, is limited (Boyd, 2004).

A broadened study, which involved the correlates affecting school climate, was indicated to address the lack of research on the impact of school resource officers and achievement.

Research shows that “positive school climate is directly related to academic achievement” (NSCC-CSEE, 2007, p. 6). Schools [and the created school climate] are the means by which children are prepared to be successful adults (Morrison et al., 2008, para. 1). Whereas the overall school climate affects the development of students and their ability for academic success (Barke, Hulgus, Schmitt, & Hough, 2006), school resource officers are a significant ingredient in the overall development of a safe and secure school climate (Riverside Department of Public Safety, 2010). Students and teachers must feel safe in order to set lofty educational goals and to take academic challenges (Walker, 2006). Therefore, school resource officers are instrumental in creating a climate that allows students and teachers to enhance academia to higher levels of success (Walker, 2006).

The *Correlates of Effective Schools* (Lezotte, 1991), provided the framework for this study. The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between school resource officers, safe school environments, and student achievement. The findings from this study may benefit school districts and boards of education as they consider the value of implementing a school resource officer program.

In Chapter Two, a review of literature included the *Correlates of Effective Schools*, the history of the school resource officer program, school resource officer responsibilities, building school and community relationships, safe school climate, and

funding the school resource officer program. The methodology of the research was explained in Chapter Three. Chapter Four included the analysis of data and in Chapter Five, a summary, conclusion, and recommendations were presented.

Chapter Two – Literature Review

Schools and communities throughout the United States employ uniformed police officers to patrol the hallways as opposed to the highways (Smart, Safe Schools, 2009). These men and women are well-trained security officers placed in school settings to “assist students in making good decisions and modeling correct behavior” (Smart, Safe Schools, 2009, para. 3). According to officials of the Monroe County, Florida Sheriff’s office and School Resource Officer Program (2009):

Throughout the United States each year over 200,000 violent crimes occur on school property. Each year over 150,000 students stay home from school because they are sick of the violence and afraid they might be stabbed, shot, or beaten. Every day in the U.S. 60 teachers are assaulted and 160 are threatened. It is estimated that between 100,000 to 135,000 guns are brought to school each day. (para. 6)

With these crises occurring more frequently, the resource officer must work in concert with school administration to permit all facets of success in the school setting while maintaining order and promoting a strong social relationship with faculty, staff, and students.

In Chapter Two, the review of literature included the history of the school resource officer program, the responsibilities of the school resource officer, building school and community relationships, safe school climate, student achievement, and funding the school resource officer program. The main topics concerning school and community, school climate, and student achievement were framed around the Correlates of Effective Schools.

Correlates of Effective Schools

Lezotte (1991) developed a basic framework for school improvement. The Correlates of Effective Schools became a reform initiative to assist school personnel in improving student achievement in an environment conducive to learning (Kennedy, 2004). The environment within an effective school is safe, orderly, and “free from violence and threats of physical or mental harm” (Taylor & Bullard, 2001, p. 1).

Lezotte (as cited in Taylor & Bullard, 2001) continued to update and redefine the Correlates of Effective Schools:

1. Safe and orderly climate. The effective school has an orderly, purposeful, businesslike environment free from violence and threats of physical or mental harm. Student behaviors are desirable and there is an environment of interaction between the students and teachers with clear articulated expectations.
2. Clearly stated and focused mission. The effective school has a clearly articulated mission. The staff shares an understanding and commitment to the mission and instructional goals as well as accepting responsibility and accountability for achieving said mission.
3. Instructional leadership. The effective school practices that the principal is the leader of the leaders not the leader of the followers.
4. High expectations for all. The effective school maintains that all students can attain mastery of the essential school skills. Schools are designed as an institution for learning, not instructing.

5. Frequent monitoring of student progress. Effective schools monitor student progress through a variety of assessment procedures. Assessments are designed so that the results can be used to improve student learning and instructional practices.
6. Maximizing learning opportunities. Effective schools protect significant time for the instruction of essential skills. Effective instruction time must be focused on skills and curriculum content considered essential, with skills of less importance abandoned.
7. Positive communications between school, home, and community. Effective schools build trust throughout the community with open lines of communication with parents, staff, and local patrons. Forming partnerships with these groups allow for all involved to have common goals and expectations. (p. 1)

Lezotte and his colleagues, Edmonds, Brookover, and other effective schools researchers identified the common characteristics of successful schools as “[a] school where all children learn” (Effective Schools, 2008, para. 1). The research of these individuals contradicts the idea that schools had “no impact on learning” (Effective Schools, 2008, para. 2). Over time, school resource officers have been instrumental in creating safe and secure learning environments that reflect effective schools research.

History of the School Resource Officer Program

The first school resource officer programs, established in the 1950s, were targeted to improve the relationships between the youth, the city, and local law enforcement officers (Nienhuis, 2008). Law enforcement officers began working in a school setting

for the first time with their duties defined as serving as teachers' helpers and counselors (Nienhuis, 2008). The Flint, Michigan program of the 1950s became a success and was developed as a prototype for forthcoming school resource officer programs throughout the United States (Tilley, n.d.).

Benigni (2004) reported that surveys conducted over the past two decades and from the time of the Flint, Michigan, implementation, have deemed school resource officer programs to be positive for school environments. The positive findings have kept police officers in schools throughout the United States for the past 60 years (Tilley, n.d.). Furthermore, the results of such data have provided information for evaluating and improving the school resource officer program.

The effects of placing law enforcement officers in educational settings have caused the job description of the resource officer to expand, over the past six decades, to different roles and responsibilities (Nienhuis, 2008). From bicycle safety to active shooter training, school resource officer duties have evolved with the culture of society (Nienhuis, 2008). Unfortunately, the need for law enforcement officers in school settings has become a necessity (Calefati, 2009). Unlike the days of Flint, Michigan, resource officers today must be trained in violence prevention and emergency preparedness rather than bicycle and traffic safety.

School resource officer program timeline.

According to McDaniel (2001), the title, *school resource officer*, is often associated with “a police chief in Miami, Florida, who coined the term in the early to mid 1960s” (p. 4). Law enforcement agencies “in Florida are believed to be some of the first to launch school resource officer programs in the 1960s and 1970s” (McDaniel, 2001, p.

4). Nienhuis (2008) reported after the school resource officer programs in Flint, Michigan, and Miami, Florida, other school resource officer programs began to develop throughout the United States:

- 1963: Tucson, Arizona - Officers were assigned to junior high schools. Their primary goal was to improve the relationship between police and juveniles. The success of the program prompted expansion into the local high school.
- 1966: Saginaw, Michigan - This program differed from others because resources did not allow them to assign just one school to the SRO [school resource officer]. Two officers were in charge of covering all the schools in the city: two high schools, five junior high schools, and twenty-seven elementary schools [and it was] quickly realized the diminishing effects of spreading their officers too thin.
- 1967: Cincinnati, Ohio - Classroom contact was the primary goal. Although the program followed the now generally accepted "Triad" approach to SRO policing, the Cincinnati officers minimized their law enforcement activities, except in emergency situations. A study conducted in 1969 showed the program was a success and the attitudes towards law enforcement had improved.
- 1968: Los Angeles - This program combined the efforts of the local police and sheriff's department. Officers and the deputies were assigned to junior high schools on a full time basis. They assumed the role of an informal counselor and became a resource for parents, students, and staff. Again, the role of the law enforcement officer was not as prevalent as in today in most SRO

programs ... [however], the program was successful and it expanded to include high schools.

- 1968: Tulare, California - One officer was assigned to cover two junior high schools. Duties were to patrol campus, prevent crimes, teach law related education, and counsel students, and spent a large portion of their time as disciplinarians. Thus, a change in attitudes towards law enforcement was minimal. Evaluations did show a large decrease in juvenile crime and arrest rates decreased by 52% in two years. The California Youth Authority wrote the program was very positive and needed to expand to cover the high schools.
- 1969: Miami, Florida - The Miami Police Department started their first program during the 1969-70 school year which was prompted by Chief Bernard Garmire, who came from Tucson, Arizona where the SRO program had long been in place. The program soon expanded from Miami to the remainder of Dade County. Evaluations showed the program to be effective at strengthening the relationship between youth and law enforcement.
- 1972: Orlando, Florida - The Orlando Police Department started a pilot program in 1972. Officers were placed full time in two junior high schools. Evaluations also showed the program to be effective in reducing crime and improving the attitudes towards law enforcement. The program was soon expanded to all Orange County secondary schools.
- 1974: Fresno, CA - The Fresno Police Department revamped its organization to include a Juvenile Bureau and reassigned its seven SROs to high schools as

"juvenile detectives," whose job it was to follow up on crimes that either occurred on school property or involved a student. Although the SROs were present in the school, patrol officers answered most distress calls.

- 1975: Hillsborough County, Florida - Officers serving as teachers, counselors, and law enforcement, were placed in the junior high schools in 1975. Positive evaluations soon prompted expansion into all junior and high schools in the county. The program included both the sheriff's department and the local police department. (p. 1)

The 1980s and 1990s were not marked by a continuous growth in numbers of school resource officer programs, yet as the 1990s progressed, school resource officer programs regained momentum due to the resurgence of community-based policing initiatives as well as incidents of school violence throughout the country (McDaniel, 2001). According to Gulen (2010), "over the past three decades, a safe and secure learning environment has become a key issue in the United States, especially after the school shootings of the 1990s" (p. 1).

It is difficult to pinpoint the exact dates or events that changed the process, although April 20, 1999, *Columbine High School*, and more recently April 16, 2007, *Virginia Tech*, marked the history books as days of infamy for school safety and security (Murray, 2009). Even now, in the 21st century, the threat of school violence has replaced drugs and gangs as the foremost concern in schools (Schabner, 2004). With the surge in school shootings committed on campuses across the United States, schools still remain a safe place to teach and learn. Although, many educators and security experts maintain that not enough is being done (Schabner, 2004).

As campus safety protocols continue to evolve, so will the need for school resource officer programs. While mounting pressure has been placed upon schools to improve academic performance, many educators far too often are focused only on testing and accountability (Safe and Drug Free Schools, n.d.). While these are critical areas of improvement, schools in quest of improving the academic achievement of their students cannot ignore the essential roles health and school safety contributes to their overall efforts (Safe and Drug Free Schools, n.d.). Therefore, the roles and responsibilities of the school resource officer have expanded to that of the educational leader (SRO Programs in Clay County, 2010).

As school resource officer programs expanded throughout the United States, the overall purpose of the program continued to change. In the early 1960s and 1970s, education and counseling were paramount concerns; however, the needed services changed swiftly to school safety and security throughout the latter part of the 1990s and into the 21st century (Hebert, 2007).

Responsibilities of the School Resource Officer

The purpose of the school resource officer program is to help encourage a safe and orderly school climate which supports student academic success (Nienhuis, 2008). Nienhuis (2008) determined “this type of setting can only be accomplished through law education, law enforcement, and cooperative efforts by school staff, students, parents, the courts, and social service organizations” (para. 6). School resource officers are only a part of the solution; they must be trained and have a working relationship with other stakeholders of the school and community in order to obtain the desired outcomes of the program (Hebert, 2007).

The responsibilities of the school resource officer will change from district to district and community to community. As many in the law enforcement community have realized, there are advantages of a close working relationship between the local police department, local school district, and the community (Pennsylvania State Police, n.d.). With this working relationship, officers are in a position to gain valuable information that can help solve crimes in the school and community, as well as assist other police officers with investigations involving youthful offenders and victims (Pennsylvania State Police, n.d.).

According to the Riverside Department of Public Safety (2010), school resource officer training consists of a three-tiered, or TRIAD, approach to dealing with school related issues, which includes:

- 1 Law-related education. The school resource officer has a growing list of instruction on a variety of law-related topics for teachers and their students. Law-related education focuses on educating students on laws pertaining to alcohol and drug awareness, constitutional law, traffic and municipal law, domestic violence, crime prevention/reporting in schools, and much more.
- 2 Law-related counselor. The school resource officer works closely with counseling staff in order to provide appropriate levels of support and information to students and parents by counseling them on a variety of issues, such as violence, anger management, personal conflicts, harassment, bullying, drug and alcohol issues, abuse, and neglect.
- 3 Law-enforcement officer. The school resource officer's goal is not to see how many students he can arrest or traffic tickets he can issue. Prevention is the

key. Just having the presence of the school resource officer deters suspicious activity and reduces crime. This presence brings a level of comfort for students, staff, and families who come to watch their children and fellow students excel. (para. 5-7)

The School Resource Officer Program (2009) described the standard frameworks of school resource officer duties:

- Preventing crime through education of our communities' children.
- Coordination and instruction of drug education programs in our schools.
- Maintaining and creating new programs to enhance children's awareness on crime prevention, drug abuse, and other concerns.
- Distributing pamphlets, fliers, and newsletters on drug abuse, safety, and crime prevention related matters.
- Holding public and/or private meetings on school related matters when requested.
- Documenting response to all programs for future reference and scheduling control.
- Participate in school related organizations outside of regular school hours, such as Parent/Teacher Organizations and school sponsored field trips.
- Any and all other law enforcement functions necessary in the schools. (para. 13)

Educators, as well as law enforcement agencies, must continue to view the school resource officer as a constructive resource who blends knowledge and experiences to allow for students to succeed in the classroom and in the community (Benigni, 2004).

Although school resource officers are given an opportunity to make certain that students stay in school and stay out of trouble, the largest part of their time is devoted to assessing, acknowledging, and diffusing student conflicts (McNicholas, 2008).

School and Community Relationships

With added awareness for the safety of young people while they are at school, McDaniel (2001) reported that “many communities are considering strategies which are intended to make schools a safer environment” (p. 1). The number of active school resource officer programs has signified that communities are investigating practical methods to preserve safe schools and manage student violence (Benigni, 2004).

According to Benigni (2004), defensive procedures, such as metal detectors and security guards, have proven ineffective in dealing with students who feel alienated from their peers or adults and in preventing intruders from disrupting the academic process. By exploring the use of uniformed police officers in school hallways, schools and communities have collaborated to improve the quality of education, as well as the quality of life in their local neighborhoods (Benigni, 2004).

Taylor and Bullard (2001) described the Correlates of Effective Schools to include “positive communications [between the] school, home, [and] community, while encouraging communication by forming partnerships ... to have common goals and expectations” (p. 1). Communities have taken action by supporting the school resource officer program since school crime and violence are a community problem (Center for the Prevention of School Violence [CPSV], 2001). Such rationale has been formed by other communities; hence, in many communities the school resource officer approach is being considered (CPSV, 2001, p.1).

Burrell (2008) questioned, “What does the presence of a school resource officer indicate to the students, staff, and community?” (para. 1). The most common response, according to Walker (2006), would be “if the school needs an armed and uniformed police officer in the building there must be an unsafe environment” (para. 1). All too often, this is not the case. As reported by Walker (2006), “school resource officers reflect a community's desire to ensure that its schools are safe, secure, and orderly. Furthermore, school resource officers represent a proactive strategy designed to bring prevention and intervention into the schools” (p. 2).

Building a community partnership.

Community perception is that school resource officers are merely police officers who have been assigned to patrol and one day were reassigned to local school buildings (Nienhuis, 2008). The ideal resource officer is one with several years of experience, highly trained, self motivated, and demonstrates the ability to effectively engage the community (Nienhuis, 2008). Essentially, the school resource officer program is a practical maneuver for schools and communities when dealing with the daily stress experienced by today’s youth (Monroe County Sheriff’s Office, 2009).

The National Association of School Resource Officers (2004) reported, “school crime, violence, and safety offenses continue to threaten our nation’s communities with an overwhelming majority of law enforcement officers taking guns away from juveniles in the community and on school property every year” (para. 8). School resource officers are becoming a mainstay in communities and on school campuses throughout the nation in hopes of securing schools and preventing violence from impacting future societies (National Association of School Resource Officers, 2004).

According to Hebert (2007), building a school community partnership with a school resource officer allows district patrons to appreciate the role the resource officer plays in the educational setting. Hebert (2007) determined, "The school resource officer serves as the liaison between the police department and the school, providing law enforcement services, as well as ensuring a safe school atmosphere by assisting in the administration of school rules and policies" (p. 2). The primary goal of this partnership is for the students, school administrators, school staff, and community patrons to become conscious and grateful of the duties of the school resource officer within the educational venue, and most importantly, the overall school environment (May, Cordner, & Fessel, 2004).

Less than a few decades ago, this philosophy of law enforcement was not questioned. Good policing was thought only as that of the professional model; well-equipped and well-trained officers who enforced the law in the professional mannerisms of the FBI (May et al., 2004). However, the crime rates soared while police and community relationships soured. It was not until the 1980s that communities and law enforcement agencies sensed a change was needed and set in motion a more community oriented approach to policing (May et al., 2004).

This collaborative approach would eventually expand to a more comprehensive role of the school resource officer, as well as the local community police officer. From neighborhood watch programs, more district-assigned foot patrols, crime stoppers, and eventually officers in schools, the role of police officers and their relationships with schools and communities began to evolve (May et al., 2004). Schools and communities

accepted the school resource officer concept. School administrators and students began to feel more comfortable with armed, uniformed police officers in the halls, while schools, which are a microcosm of the community, began to see a reduction in crime and fear which leads to a more safe and effective school environment (May et al., 2004).

From this beginning, came the concept of building a school and community partnership to allow for a smooth transition from schools without school resource officers to schools with school resource officers. Furthermore, community ownership had to be created in school resource officer programs as they began to be recognized throughout the United States (May et al., 2004). With this, schools and communities became less apprehensive about the presence of uniformed and armed officers in schools (May et al., 2004). Hebert (2007) reported:

School resource officers are an example of a proactive approach to decrease crime and violence in schools; while providing a more secure feeling for the neighborhood and community that serves as feeder systems to our schools.

(para. 2)

The debate is not whether a school needs a school resource officer program, but how to construct, safeguard, and nurture the relationship to what is good for the student population and school community (Hebert, 2007). According to Ken Trump, President of National School Safety and Security Services, “relationships between schools and their public safety partners cannot start when they first meet in the middle of the parking lot on a bomb threat” (as cited in Mertens, 2007, p. 1). It is imperative that the resource officer’s role be defined with avenues of collaboration in place to insure a system of cooperation between school, community, and law enforcement.

Another aspect of the school, community, and a resource officer partnership, is helping the resource officer create a sense of belonging in the school and community. Hebert (2007), reported that school administrators work diligently to include the resource officer in the day-to-day functions of a school district and maintain that “school resource officers stand out in a school; they definitely do not blend in since most are in uniform and carry a weapon” (para.11). Many schools allow school resource officers to apply for non-certified supervisory positions to allow students the opportunity to observe them in a less threatening manner.

Effective school resource officers who build strong school and community relationships normally have a vested interest in the three-way partnership of school, community, and law enforcement (Hebert, 2007). This interest, normally, is a personal tie, such as their children. This, combined with community involvement, allows for school leaders to clarify the need of the resource officer program and solidifies that school safety and security are a serious business, thereby making the school climate safer for teachers and students to focus more on academic achievement and less on crime and violence (Hebert, 2007).

In today’s culture, law enforcement officers are usually mocked, with students being encouraged by peers and adults to ignore or disobey law enforcement directives completely (Hebert, 2007). Therefore, for school resource officer programs to attain success, in the school and community, there must be collaboration among all district stakeholders to develop a mutual respect of both school and community law officials (Mertens, 2007). This working relationship must be created prior to any crisis situation for a team concept to be employed during or after any critical event (Mertens, 2007). The

Center for the Prevention of School Violence (2001) stated, “This partnership between the school, community, and law enforcement helps to develop a safe school with a focus on prevention and early intervention rather than after-the-fact punitive measures” (para. 6).

School Safety: Priority Number One

Before murdering 13 people, injuring 23, and then taking their own lives, Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris, of Columbine High School, broadcast their unthinkable intentions publicly (Calefati, 2009). Unfortunately, “no one took these two boys or any of the warning signs seriously, or in some cases even noticed them at all” (Calefati, 2009, p. 1). The results of the Columbine tragedy have changed the focus of schools throughout the United States from an academic focus to a safety and awareness focus.

Progressive communities, school leaders, and local law enforcement agencies are seeking new and innovative ways to convey the message of needed safety awareness and preparedness while maintaining student academic focus (Trump, 2008). Communities, however discontent, will be forgiving of school officials for low test scores; however, if something tragic happens, in a situation that could have been prevented, parents and patrons will be less forgiving (Trump, 2008). School leaders have to recognize that when safety issues occur at their school, their history of academic excellence becomes irrelevant.

Calefati (2009) stated that, “helping students feel connected to their school is a key component of the safety process” (p. 1). Students need to feel valued by their teachers and peers to feel safe and are then less likely to perpetrate school violence (Schabner, 2004). Newman, a Princeton University professor of sociology, stated:

Schools must make it easy for students to report threats they hear in the lunchroom and any troubling behavior they see in the hallways if administrators hope to identify potential dangers before it is too late. (as cited in Calefati, 2009, p. 1)

Calefati (2009), like Newman, encouraged the placement of school resource officers in schools: “students tend to trust and confide in school resource officers due to relationships established as liaisons between the school and law enforcement” (p. 2).

Pollack and Sundermann (2001) stated, recent acts of school violence have proven “safety is not about any single method of control: metal detectors, surveillance systems, or swift punishment, nor is it about any single risk factor such as dysfunctional homes or inadequate schools” (para. 1). Incidents of school violence have shown those who, for unforeseen reasons, will attempt to hurt peers, teachers, or themselves cannot always be identified (Pollack & Sundermann, 2001). However, there is an understanding “that safe schools require broad based efforts on behalf of the community, educators, parents, law enforcement agencies, and faith based organizations” (Pollack & Sundermann, 2001, para. 1). School safety entails a team constructed of stakeholders in the school and community who possess valuable opinions of the safety plan that will encompass their community-school and children.

School Safety: Comprehensive Plan

Communities have increased efforts to reduce school violence and substance abuse by developing a thorough safe plan (Pollack & Sundermann, 2001).

Although certain risk factors for violence exist outside the purview of schools, schools can lessen the impact of these risk factors and avoid exacerbating them,

furthermore, when schools foster resilience, students are empowered to overcome risk factors that could lead them to making dangerous choices. Subsequently, when schools enhance protective factors, they offer students the ability and opportunity to redirect their energy toward achieving success. (Pollack & Sundermann, 2001, para. 8)

A comprehensive school plan becomes a major component in the school and community improvement process. According to Pollack and Sundermann (2001), schools that have comprehensive violence prevention and response plans in place, report the following positive results (Pollack and Sundermann, 2001):

- Improved academics.
- Reduced disciplinary referrals and suspensions.
- Improved school climate that is more conducive to learning.
- Improved staff morale.
- More efficient use of human and financial resources.
- Enhanced safety. (para. 3)

Isolating risk factors that contribute to school violence can be a difficult challenge. The National Resource Center for Safe Schools (2001) determined, “safe schools are more often than not a collaboration of many groups guided by a host of stakeholders with one common purpose” (para. 7). More often, that sole purpose is student safety.

The following is a list of ten essential components of a school safety plan, as described by the National Resource Center for Safe Schools (2001):

1. Creative school wide prevention and intervention strategies.

2. Developing emergency response planning.
3. Developing school policies and understanding legal considerations.
4. Creating positive school climate and culture.
5. Implementing ongoing staff development.
6. Ensuring quality facilities and technology.
7. Fostering relationships between school and law enforcement agencies.
8. Instituting links with mental health and social services.
9. Fostering family and community involvement.
10. Acquiring and utilizing resources. (para. 8)

While it is vital these components are addressed, it is equally important that schools develop a strategic plan for implementation and evaluation (Pollack & Sundermann, 2001).

Safety plan evaluation.

Once a program or strategy for school safety is in place, the comprehensive school safety planning process is still not complete. Pollack and Sundermann (2001) provided five crucial components for evaluating school safety programs: “focusing and designing the evaluation, collecting and analyzing information, and reporting the findings” (para. 18). Evaluations begin with determining what is to be evaluated and must end with how the data will be used (Pollack & Sundermann, 2001).

According to Dwyer and Osher (as cited in Pollack & Sundermann, 2001), the essential components of a school safety plan that must be evaluated consist of the common characteristics of a successful and safe school:

- Focuses on academic achievement.

- Involves families in meaningful ways.
- Develops links to the community.
- Emphasizes positive relationships among students and staff.
- Discusses safety issues openly.
- Treats all students with respect.
- Creates avenues for students to share concerns.
- Helps children feel safe when expressing their feelings.
- Has a system in place to refer children who have been abused or neglected.
- Offers extended day programs for children.
- Promotes good citizenship and character.
- Identifies problems and assesses progress toward resolving them.
- Supports students in making the transition to adult life and work. (pp. 6-7)

Unfortunately, not all schools and school leaders have the resources or the free time to develop and implement all elements of the safety plan. Therefore, a safe and orderly school must share responsibilities of the development of the safety plan with the community and local law enforcement agency. School resource officers become an extremely important stakeholder in this implementation process. Smaller and less wealthy school district have to make a choice; focus much needed resources toward academic success or towards creating a safe school environment.

How do we keep children safe at school and increase academic achievement?

This question captivates the nation as tragic stories of school violence unfold through the media (Paine, 2006). Educators and parents alike must balance the need for school safety with the increasing demands of school improvement issues. Utilizing the local law

enforcement resources is possible in some communities; however, in rural America, these resources seldom exist. With a lack of resources, added to the economic downturn, schools and communities are left trying to balance school safety and academic success. Unfortunately, funding issues in K-12 school systems have become as much of an obstacle in violence prevention as connectedness and belonging (Finn, 2006).

School Climate and Student Achievement

The concept of school climate has been defined in many ways through education literature over the last several years (Yonezawa, Jones, Mehan, & McClure, 2008). It has been equated with the ecology of the school, a safe and healthy school setting, classroom participation structures, a caring school environment, and the culture of the school (Yonezawa et al., 2008). School climate, or environment, is defined by the Education Development Center (2003), as “the link that connects the large amount of activities on a campus” (p. 95).

The Education Development Center (2003) determined, “school climate is a system of shared beliefs, values, and attitudes that shape interactions between students, teachers, and administrators” (p. 96). Koth, Bradshaw, and Leaf (2008), believed “this system of shared beliefs help to set the parameters of acceptable behaviors and norms within the local school” (p. 96). Therefore, “school climate is the quality of school life that either supports or undercuts the learning, achievement, and development of the students enrolled” (Morrison et al., 2008, para. 4).

Walker (2006) determined, “if students feel safe and secure in the educational environment, and are allowed to take academic chances, the likelihood is strong that their

achievement levels will be higher than if they are in a stressful and unsafe environment”

(p. 2). McDaniel (2001) reported:

Although statistics on school crime and violence convey that such crime and violence are not occurring in greater numbers, there is, at minimum, anecdotal evidence that suggests that the types of incidents that are occurring on school properties may be more severe and have a major impact on the educational process for which schools are responsible. (p. 1)

According to Walker (2006), “school resource officers, effectively used, can help create the desired environment that allows for academic success to be obtained” (p. 2).

Although research has been conducted on the belief that a more positive school climate is equated to higher student academic achievement, little research has been conducted that demonstrates the link outright (Yonezawa et al., 2008). Although, as reported by Oakes (2003), “students must attend schools that are free of overcrowding, violence, unsafe and unsanitary conditions, and other features of school climate that diminish academic achievement and college access to have the benefit of academic freedom” (p. 2). A school’s physical environment can be as much a factor in student academic success as the culture and relational aspect of school climate.

Therefore, “a well maintained physical environment with a positive psychosocial climate and culture can foster school connectedness, which boosts student and staff health, as well as students’ educational achievement” (Education Development Center, 2003, para. 2). Morrison et al. (2008) stated :

In any society, schools are the means by which children are prepared to be successful. The life experiences of children at home, in the community, and in the

school influence how they fare developmentally during the K-12 educational experience. (para. 1)

Moreover, research indicates that educational professionals are beginning to recognize that community agencies, such as law enforcement, can offer many valuable resources that impact student success (Benigni, 2004). Not to say that academic preparation is in question; Fopiana and Haynes (2001) suggested that over the last two decades the social and emotional development in the educational process has become as much of a factor in the development of school safety and student success as the educational physical surroundings.

School climate takes on many forms, one of which is the school's physical appearance. According to the report generated by the Education Development Center (2003), *Action Steps for Implementing a Healthy School Environment*:

A school's physical environment includes the building, surrounding grounds, campus noise, temperature, lighting, as well as any physical, biological, or chemical agents that might exist. The psychosocial school environment encompasses the attitudes, feelings, and values of students and staff. (para. 2)

District and building level administrators, in concert with the school resource officer, are charged with the responsibility of creating and sustaining a positive physical and psychosocial environment in the schools or buildings they are assigned.

Accomplishing this task requires a commitment to consistency when defining school climate (Educational Development Center, 2003). The overarching development of a safe and positive school climate in local schools must be shared by all school personnel, as well as the community who encompasses the district. According to Hebert (2007):

School leaders, when forming school community partnerships, must see the relationship with school resource officers as something that should be created, protected, and nourished. A cooperative, working relationship with these officers helps not only the school community, but the neighborhoods that feed the school population. (para. 15)

In turn, the effectiveness of this relationship will foster a safe and healthy school climate allowing for a positive and supportive partnership between local law enforcement, community groups, organizations, and the school district.

School climate is beginning to be seen as having a positive and lasting effect on students and their success. Morrison et al. (2008) listed consequences that individually impact school climate. School climate:

- directly related to student academic achievement,
- relates to student self-concept and self-esteem,
- is predictive of mothers' reports of school aged children's psychiatric problems and alcohol use,
- has a relationship between absenteeism and rate of student suspension,
- is a critical part of lowering risk taking behaviors and promoting health efforts,
- relates to high correlations between length of school attendance,
- student health, and
- tends to foster attachment: how connected students and school personnel felt to one another and how connected the school is to the community. (Morrison et al., 2008, para.7)

Additionally, “school connectedness is a powerful predictor of health and academic outcomes, violence prevention, and a protective factor in risky behaviors related to sex, violence, and drug use” (NSCC-CSEE, 2007, p. 7).

The NSCC-CSEE (2007) reported, “research confirms what teachers and parents have claimed for decades: a safe and supportive school environment, in which students have positive social relationships and are respected, engaged in their work, and feel competent, matters” (p. 4). This opinion is formed from the time parents, community members, and educators walk through the doors of any school building. Judgments are quickly formed concerning whether students are motivated in this environment, how well students will perform academically, and if they can become life-long learners within school halls (NSCC-CSEE, 2007).

According to the NSCC-CSEE (2007), other factors questioned are safety, comfort, and support, as well as whether educators and students engage in inspiring and noteworthy work, and furthermore:

[A]safe, caring, participatory, and responsive school climate tends to foster a greater attachment to school, as well as provides the optimal foundation for social, emotional, and academic learning. One of the fundamentally important dimensions in school climate is how connected people feel towards one another and how connected the school is to the community. (p. 6)

School climate researchers are studying “the extent to which students feel attached to at least one, caring, responsible adult at school” (NSCC-CSEE, 2007, p. 6), which is a strong predictor of adolescent health, academic outcomes, and violence prevention (NSCC-CSEE, 2007).

As violence continues to plague schools, educators concentrate on prevention strategies that are more student focused and academically supported (Hernandez & Susan, 2004). In turn, it is critical that schools continue to create educational environments, free of violence and harassing distractions, with objectives that are positive and student support centered (Friedland, 1999). Nevertheless, a balance must remain within security efforts that are geared toward fostering student resiliency, connectedness, and social competence (Paine, 2006). Central to this effort are the duties of the school resource officer, as well as the relationships that have been established within the school and the community (Paine, 2006).

Paramount to the efforts of schools to perfect school climate, enrich student lives, and allow for educators to reach maximum levels of teaching, the school resource officer is key and must be present to accomplish this formula for success. Even though the school resource officer is not the disciplinarian, he/she is ultimately responsible for the overall safety and well-being of faculty, staff, and students (Yeagley, 2000). As determined by Kennedy (2009), school safety is a major emphasis in the development of a positive, supportive, and connected school climate that will allow teachers to teach and students to learn at an academically successful level. According to the Riverside Department of Public Safety (2010), the goal of the student resource officer program is to encourage a safe-school setting conducive for learning.

Funding the School Resource Officer Program

The debate about who should fund school resource officer programs remains a major topic of interest (Finn, 2006). Both school and community law agencies are reaping benefits from these programs, so most schools and communities share the

common expenses. With funding sources becoming depleted, pressure has been placed on local community partners to find creative funding options to maintain the level of safety and security in their schools (Finn, 2006).

School resource officer programs have proven beneficial for both schools and local police departments. School resource officer programs allow local police to concentrate on patrolling the streets and responding to 911 calls during school hours instead of having to report to the various numbers of campus incidents, as well as allowing schools to have immediate assistance for investigations or violent behaviors (Finn, 2006). Schools and community police agencies realize the urgency of maintaining active school resource officer programs. School districts represent the most common source of funding for these programs, part of which comes in the form of Federal Title IV Safe and Drug Free monies (Finn, 2006). Once implemented, the success of the resource officer program adds pressure to schools to continue funding due to the amount of negative press that is possible if the program is dropped prior to a catastrophic event (Finn, 2006).

Therefore, school administrators and local police liaisons utilize the following points to encourage school boards and local city government to continue funding (Finn, 2006):

- Improve safety. Most schools and communities support efforts they believe will improve safety in schools and protect academic achievement. School resource officers serve to keep school administrators, teachers, and student's safe, allowing teaching and learning to take place (Finn, 2006). In as much, the prevention of school violence due to daily contact between school

resource officers and students could prove to be the most beneficial aspect of school safety (Finn, 2006).

- Increase perception of safety. School administrators realize the need for students to feel safe in order to reach higher levels of academic success. A school resource officer's presence makes an impact on the student's awareness of safety in the school setting (Finn, 2006).
- Quick response time. School districts and city governments also see benefits in the quick response of school resource officers as compared to local police departments. This response relieves school administrators from having to confine and calm troubled students for an extended period of time, therefore eliminating opportunities for more aggressive action (Finn, 2006).

Once a school resource officer program has been established, local districts often increase their portion of the program cost due to the feeling of safety and security that allows students and teachers opportunities for academic success. Furthermore, a tragedy at a school that has reduced their school resource officer programs could become a political nightmare (Finn, 2006).

As school funding across the United States continues to decrease, community partnerships will need to think outside the box to continue funding for programs of safety and security. School resource officer programs have become an instrument to increase school safety measures which should lead to increased academic achievement. School administrators and community leaders understand the need for both and are aware of the possible consequences related to eliminating this program (Finn, 2006).

Summary

Increased crime and academic accountability within schools have increased the need for a more concerted effort among schools, communities, and local law enforcement to provide safe and orderly school climates. Missouri, like many other states, has programs in place to deter school violence and allow for teachers and students to succeed academically while being free from distractions and acts of school violence (Pollack & Sundermann, 2001). School resource officer programs are one way that schools are preparing for the worst, school violence, while maintaining hope for the best, increased academic achievement.

In reviewing the literature, schools across the United States are taking a proactive approach to reducing school violence. While many schools are mandating changes to crisis plans and safety regulations, schools must go beyond the creation of such plans and recognize that students need to feel connected to the schools and communities to create the desired environment to achieve academic success (Pollack & Sundermann, 2001). Hence, efforts to improve school safety must involve students at an early age with continued reinforcement throughout their education (Pollack & Sundermann). School safety is a process that involves many factors, not just a plan on paper.

Lezotte and his colleagues researched characteristics of successful schools (Effective Schools, 2008). Because of this research, the ground work was in place to develop further studies in regard to school climate, with the consideration that a safe school climate may lead to increased student achievement. The Safe and Drug Free School Coalition (n.d.) stated that “school and community leaders cannot ignore the

impact health education, school safety, and low rates of alcohol and drug use” (para. 3) have on school safety and academic success.

School resource officers are key in creating and maintaining school environments that are safe and orderly. School resource officers have evolved from educational helpers, in the 1950s, to educational leaders of today, while sustaining the overall responsibility of keeping schools and school grounds safe. According to Calefati (2009), “schools are doing a much better job of keeping students safe” (p. 1), even though school yards are still being attacked all over the United States (Calefati, 2009).

School administrators and school resource officers are responsible for creating and sustaining a safe and healthy school environment that models a cooperative and collaborative relationship with community stakeholders. Systemic reorganization of this magnitude can take time to develop and implement (Education Development Center, 2003). When all stakeholders within the community collaborate for the educational benefit of their children and place a high priority to outcomes that are student driven, everyone succeeds.

The growing number of school resource officer programs throughout the country indicates that communities are searching for effective means of deterring school violence and protecting education. Through security systems and metal detectors, school administrators are trying to prevent incidents of violence, as well as open lines of communication without alienating students from their peers and parents (School Resource Officers, 2004). Therefore, to ensure that schools are a safe place to learn without fear, schools and communities have placed armed, uniformed police officers in the school setting.

The causes and effects Klebold, Harris, and the thousands of other non-connected students who disrupt the educational process by harassing and bullying their peers, have to be monitored (Hernandez & Susan, 2004). School violence, unfortunately, is not the only concern school personnel have in regard to students feeling safe and secure at school. Students may refuse to speak out in class for fear of ridicule, verbal teasing, offensive touching, slaps, pushing, and racial/ethnic slurs; which are examples of what students are dealing with on a daily basis (Hernandez & Susan, 2004).

In Chapter Three, the methodology of the study was explained. Within Chapter Four, an analysis of data was presented. The summary, conclusion, and recommendations were included in Chapter Five.

Chapter Three - Methodology

In this chapter, the methodology selected for the study was described. The statement of the problem, null and alternative hypotheses, research questions, population and sample, research design, and treatment and analysis of data were detailed. This study was divided into two sections. Section I consisted of using an independent samples *t*-test to determine if there was a significant difference between public school districts with school resource officers and school districts without school resource officers, regarding safe school climate and academic success. Section II consisted of a descriptive study using a survey to examine the perceptions of school superintendents related to the presence of school resource officers and their impact on school climate and academic success.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between school resource officers, school climate, and increased student achievement. Also, the perceptions of public school superintendents regarding the impact of resource officers were explored. The following research questions guided this study:

1. What relationship exists between the presence of a school resource officer, as related to school safety and academic success?
2. What is the perception of school superintendents regarding the impact of school resource officers and: a) the overall school climate, b) the sense of safety within the school building, c) communications between home, school, and community?

Population and Sample

The population for the Section I was comprised of 523 public school districts in Missouri. From the population, 40 school districts with and without active school resource officer programs were selected for the sample. Data retrieved from the Missouri School Resource Officers Association [MSROA] (2010), indicated that there were more school districts within the desired population that did not have school resource officer programs than schools with resource officer programs.

From the list of school districts obtained from the Missouri Association of School Administrators [MASA] (2010), and the MSROA (2010), two groups were selected; schools with school resource officer programs and schools without school resource officer programs. Each group consisted of 20 school districts. Data retrieved from the MSROA (2010) established there were 20 school districts with 2,000 or less students with active school resource officer programs. These schools were selected as the sample. From the list of schools obtained from the MASA, schools districts were sorted into specific groups, 2,000 students or less, and then randomly selected to attain the 20 schools without school resource officer programs.

Section II consisted of surveying 200 of the 260 public school districts in Missouri with populations of 2,000 students or less. Districts with K-8 configurations and K-12 districts with less than 200 students were eliminated from the sample. A list of 523 school districts with enrollment figures, as well as superintendents' email addresses, was obtained from the MASA. Surveys were emailed to schools to attain the superintendents' perceptions on the impact school resource officers have on school safety, school climate, and academic achievement.

Null Hypothesis

The following null hypothesis was tested in this study:

H₀. There is no significant difference between schools with school resource officer programs and schools without a school resource officer program regarding school safety and academic success.

Alternative Hypothesis

The following alternate hypothesis was tested in this study:

H₁. There is a significant difference between schools with school resource officer programs and schools without school resource officer programs regarding school safety and academic success.

Instruments Used to Collect Data

Section I: Public school districts in Missouri with active school resource officer programs and public school districts in Missouri without active school resource officer programs were examined. Data were collected on 40 public school districts in Missouri: 20 school districts with school resource officer programs and 20 school districts without. Each school district studied had a total student population of 2,000 students or less. To determine whether a significant difference existed between the two samples, relating to school safety and student achievement, an independent samples t-test was applied using the following data obtained from the MODESE (2010a):

- Performance standards met on the annual performance report.
- Attendance rate.
- Dropout rate.
- Graduation rate.

- Expenditures per average daily attendance.
- ACT scores.
- Free and reduced price meal percentage.
- Number of discipline incidents of students with 10 or more days out-of school suspensions.

Section II of the study was a quantitative design using descriptive statistics. The survey was created utilizing the conceptual frameworks of the safe and effective school correlates. The survey was designed to examine the perceptions of superintendents in Missouri public schools regarding the impact of an assigned school resource officer in relation to school safety and student achievement (see Appendix D). The survey utilized yes and no questions, as well as a Likert scale, to produce the data needed for analyzing.

According to Trochim (2006):

Descriptive statistics are used to describe the basic features of the data in a study. They provide simple summaries about the sample and the measures. Together with simple graphics analysis, they form the basis of virtually every quantitative analysis of data. (para. 1)

The design of the survey allowed superintendents of schools with or without school resource officer programs to answer questions in a short time frame by use of the Survey Monkey Website. Along with the survey, a letter explaining protection of anonymity was provided. Furthermore, each superintendent was provided an opportunity to receive a copy of the findings. Superintendents were informed of the intent of the study and given an opportunity to decline participation. Surveys were emailed to 200 school

districts with follow-up emails sent every two weeks as a reminder until the minimum of 45% response rate was received.

Data Analysis

Section I: Data generated from the MODESE were compared by using the SPSS 18 statistical program to determine a value for p . Values were computed by comparing school districts with and without school resource officer programs: number of standards met on the annual performance report, attendance rate, dropout rate, graduation rate, ACT scores, and number of disciplinary incidents of students with 10 or more days out-of-school suspensions. All school data were obtained from the school statistics section of the MODESE (2010a) website. Variables were compared using an independent samples t -test with $p \leq .05$ (Trochim, 2006). According to the SPSS 18.0 On-Line Tutorial (2010), p values less than .05 demonstrate a significant difference between independent variables.

Data were examined to reject, or fail to reject, the null hypothesis. If $p \geq .05$; then there was no significant difference between variables, and the decision to fail to reject the null hypothesis was warranted. If the null hypothesis was rejected, then the data suggested that a significant difference exists between variables. If a difference was found, it did not mean one variable caused the outcome, only that a significant difference between the defined and tested variables existed (Trochim, 2006).

Section II: Data were generated by the use of a survey designed to gain superintendents' perceptions on the impact school resource officers have on school safety and increased student achievement. Data were gathered and analyzed to identify common themes. Then, the findings were tabulated using an Excel spreadsheet. Figures were generated to further illustrate the findings.

Summary

This study was designed and conducted to determine whether the presence of a school resource officer significantly impacts safety and academic achievement in schools. An independent samples *t*-test was used to analyze data from 40 school districts to determine if a significant difference was present between variables: a) the overall school climate, b) the sense of safety within the school building, c) communications between home, school, and community. A stratified sample of schools, with and without school resource officer programs, was selected and *p* values determined. Surveys were developed to gain perceptions of 200 school superintendents concerning the impact resource officers have on school safety and student achievement.

Furthermore, if a significant difference does not exist, either directly or indirectly, between school resource officers and student achievement, discussion regarding the need for school resource officers in schools would be indicated. If there is a significant difference between the two variables, the results of this study may initiate discussion regarding the placement of school resource officers in school buildings and justification for funding this program. Therefore, this study was determined to have merit and necessity.

In Chapter Four, the analysis of data was presented. Chapter Five comprised the summary and conclusions. Recommendations for future research were offered.

Chapter Four – Analysis of Data

The purpose of this study was to determine if the presence of school resource officers in public schools impacts school climate and student achievement. Research conducted by such organizations as the National Association of School Resource Officers have shown sobering statistics of crime and violence prevention by school resource officers throughout the United States (Delisio, 2005). The data also indicate that students feel comfortable disclosing threats of violence to school resource officers, with the confidence of anonymity (Delisio, 2005).

Since the early 1950s, school resource officers have been in public schools patrolling hallways and becoming student confidants (Tilley, n.d.). Yet little, if any, research has been conducted to determine the impact of school resource officers on student academic achievement. However, according to Herbert (2007), school resource officers create a presence in the hallways and other parts of the campus that allow for preventive discipline and violence prevention. This presence, as well as the collaborating relationship developed by school administrators and school resource officers can lessen crime and violence, and therefore, assist in the improvement of academic achievement (Herbert, 2007).

For this study, a list of schools with school resource officer programs in Missouri public school districts was obtained from the MSROA. School district data were then collected from the MODESE pertaining to schools with active resource officer programs and schools without active resource officer programs.

Following this collection of data, an independent samples *t*-test was conducted. To enhance the study, an online survey was distributed to superintendents in Missouri public schools with a student population of 2,000 or less. The survey was designed to determine superintendents' perceptions of school resource officers and the impact this program has on school safety and student achievement.

Of the 200 schools surveyed, 98 (47.5%) superintendents completed the survey. Furthermore, 40 schools, 20 with active school resource officer programs and 20 without school resource officer programs, were selected for comparison of academic achievement. The academic areas used for comparison were: annual performance report, attendance rate, dropout rate, graduation rate, ACT scores, and number of disciplinary incidents of students with 10 or more days of out-of-school suspensions.

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What relationship exists between the presence of a school resource officer, as related to school safety and academic success?
2. What is the perception of school superintendents regarding the impact of school resource officers and: a) the overall school climate, b) the sense of safety within the school building, c) communications between home, school, and community?

Null Hypothesis

The following null hypothesis was tested in this study:

H₀. There is no significant difference between schools with school resource officer programs as compared to schools without a resource officer programs regarding school safety and academic success.

Alternative Hypothesis

The following alternate hypothesis was tested in this study:

H₁. There is a significant difference between schools with school resource officer programs and schools without school resource officer programs regarding school safety and academic success.

School District Demographics

To provide a better understanding of the school districts selected for this study, demographic information was collected. The information included average student enrollment, schools with early childhood services, free and reduced price meal percentages, and expenditures per average daily attendance. Student and school demographics will vary, as will the needs of each particular school district. Therefore, an understanding of the schools selected for this study may be beneficial when analyzing the data.

Organization of the Chapter

The purpose of this chapter was to provide an analysis of data collected. Included in Section I was a description of the demographics, population, and participants of the study, as well as an explanation of the analysis of data. School district data were retrieved from the MODESE and then compared using the SPSS Data Analysis Software. The online survey, which was designed to gather superintendents' perceptions of the impact of resource officers on school climate and student achievement, was described in Section II. Also included was an analysis of each survey response as viewed through two overarching themes: the correlates of effective schools, with a strong emphasis on school safety; and, the overall school climate.

Section I: Comparison Study

The two sample groups in this study were comprised of Missouri public school districts. Two lists were obtained; one from the MSROA (2010) of schools with active school resource officer programs, and the other from the MASA (2010) of school districts and contact information for all Missouri public school district superintendents. From the list obtained from MSROA (2010), 20 school districts were found to have active school resource officer programs; therefore, all 20 schools were included in the sample. Because there were more school districts without active school resource officer programs than with, a random sample was used.

To conduct an independent sample *t*-test, 20 schools without school resource officer programs, were randomly selected from the list of schools obtained from the MASA (2010). Selected groups were then compared by the use of the MODESE (2010a) data in categories which included the number of standards met on the annual performance report, attendance rate, dropout rate, graduation rate, ACT scores, and number of discipline incidents of students with 10 or more days of out-of-school suspensions. Data representing each group of schools and the demographic information considered to be of importance in regard to this particular study were included for examination. The data were compared and analyzed to form statistical conclusions.

As parents, school leaders, and school resource officers realize, each school district is unique (Betts, Zau, & Rice, 2003). Therefore, demographic data of school districts selected for the study were compiled using the school district statistics, as well as

the school district report card available on the MODESE (2010a) website. Data collected consisted of average enrollment, district pre-school presence, average free and reduced price meal rates, and average expenditures per pupil.

Average enrollment.

According to Tramaglini (2010), research of school size and student achievement shows “little evidence...that demonstrates the relationship between economies of scale and increased student learning or better cost efficiency” (p. 29). The same can be said for the need for safety interventions. Schools with lower enrollments allow teachers and administration to maximize student contact, which yields constructive situations for student learning (Tramaglini, 2010).

The financing of the American public school system has long been understood as a challenging process and one within which there have been any number of controversies (Podgursky & Springer, 2006). With part of Missouri’s public school funding based on student enrollment, larger school districts with increased safety risk may be afforded the opportunity to retain the school resource officers, while smaller, less fortunate schools may not. Schools selected for this study with active school resource officer programs had an average enrollment of 1,266.6 students, ranging from 453 as the smallest to 1,906 as the largest for this group. Schools without school resource officer programs had enrollments ranging from 266 students to 1,893, with an average of 874.5 students.

Schools with early childhood services.

According to Karoly (1999), whose research was included in the study, *Education for All*, “children who participate in high-quality early childhood education develop better language skills, score higher in school-readiness tests, and have better social skills and

fewer behavioral problems once they enter school” (p. 1). Stegelin (2004) reported, in an article in the National Dropout Prevention Center [NDPC] News, “high-quality early childhood education has the greatest positive effect on children from lower socioeconomic status, children who are at risk because of other circumstances, and children with disabilities and special needs” (para. 1). This is signified by the findings from research that early identification of at-risk or special needs is instrumental in the prevention of academic failure (NDPC, 2004).

As children become adults, research reveals “if children attend high quality early childhood education centers they were less likely to be school dropouts, dependent on welfare, or arrested for criminal activity (Karoely, 1999, p.1). Early childhood education data for the selected group’s show that schools with and without school resource officer programs had the same number of active pre-school programs. Of the 40 schools selected for this study, each group consisted of 16 school districts that operated early childhood programs and four that did not. This information could be examined more thoroughly when analyzing the impact of academic achievement.

Free and reduced price meal percentage.

According to Pellino (2002), economic studies show that poverty is now and always will be an issue that more and more of children will have to face and overcome. Socioeconomic status and school level are critical when identifying schools that may need more focus on prevention and intervention efforts pertaining to school violence (Boroughs, Massey, & Armstrong, 2006). Furthermore, students deemed at-risk are more likely to fail in school and life because of their socio-economic circumstances (Pellino, 2002).

Data collected found schools without school resource officer programs had a higher free and reduced price meal rate, which could signify a higher poverty rate, as well as a lower socioeconomic classification. Schools without school resource officer programs had an average of 53.61% of their children qualifying for the free and reduced price meal program, while schools with school resource officers averaged a 44.34% participation rate. Of the school districts selected, the highest rate of participation was found in the schools without school resource officers group, 71.7%, with the lowest, 26.5%, found in schools with resource officers.

Expenditures per average daily attendance.

Deliberations about how to enhance academics and safety in the public school systems often focus on whether government should allocate more funding towards public education (Lips, Watkins, & Flemming, 2008). Consequently, as reported by Lips et al, “continuous spending increases have not corresponded with equal improvement in American educational performance” (para. 23). Although size and location may play an instrumental role in funding, data collected for the study found that districts without school resource officers reported spending approximately \$600 more per student when comparing per pupil expenditures with districts with school resource officer programs.

Per pupil expenditures is defined by the MODESE (2010a) as the amount of funds a school district spends per student, in one school year, to provide educational services. In comparing schools with and without school resource officer programs, schools with school resource officers averaged \$7,873.55 per student, while schools without school resource officers spent an average of \$8,432.50. Factors that may lead to a variance for this variable are size and location of the school district.

Data Analysis

The following statistical data were obtained by using the SPSS software to provide p values by the use of an independent samples t -test. Data obtained from the MODESE (2010a) were compared in the areas of: number of standards met on the annual performance report, attendance rate, dropout rate, graduation rate, ACT scores, and number of discipline incidents of students with 10 or more days of out-of-school suspensions.

Annual performance report (APR).

In reviewing the Annual Performance Reports (APR) of the selected school districts, it was found that school districts with resource officers met more academic standards than schools without school resource officers. This variable was chosen regarding student achievement because the Missouri School Improvement Program (MSIP) determines the academic accreditation level of a school district by the number of standards met per school year (MODESE, 2010b). Upon further review of the MODESE (2010b) publication, *Understanding Your APR*, the standards were explained:

Performance standards are evaluated using status and progress measures to determine if a standard is met. Status and progress points are combined to determine if a standard is met, unless no progress points are possible. Progress points toward meeting a standard are earned for the method awarding the maximum number of points for the district. (p. 1)

Schools with school resource officer programs were compared by the use of an independent samples t -test, to schools without school resource officer programs concentrating on number of standards met, or APR scores. Data revealed that schools

with school resource officer programs had a mean score of 13.05, while schools without school resource officer programs had a mean score of 12.55, of a possible 14 points. Furthermore, it was concluded that a p value of .387 showed no significant difference between the two variables (see Table 1).

Table 1

Annual Performance Report (APR)

	School Districts	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	p Value
Total APR	With SRO Program	20	13.05	1.46808	.387
	Without SRO Program	20	12.55	2.08945	

Note. p values less than .05 demonstrates a significant difference between independent variables (SPSS 18.0 On-Line Tutorial, 2010). Mean is equal to the overall number of performance standards met of a possible 14.

District attendance rate.

According to Lamdin (as cited in Epstein & Sheldon, 2002), research on student absenteeism “suggests students who attend school on a regular basis score higher on achievement test than their frequently absent classmates” (p. 308). The fact is, poor attendance is a risk factor for dropping out of school, and compulsive absenteeism can have negative consequences for individual students and school districts (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002). Not only is student achievement tied to student attendance in most cases, so is school funding (Lips et al., 2008). Low student achievement and poor student attendance are factors that diminish educational resources.

Schools that employed school resource officers had a higher overall student attendance rate, yet statistically, with a p value of .518, the presence of a school resource officer made no significant difference in school attendance rates (see Table 2). Even with

average attendance rates of 95.02% for schools with school resource officers, as compared to 94.79% for schools without school resource officers, reducing rates of truancy and absenteeism will continue to be an ongoing battle (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002). When it comes to student attendance, the culture and learning climate within schools affect student success, and students cannot reach academic success if they are not in attendance (Lezotte, 1991).

Table 2

Attendance Rate

	School Districts	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	<i>p</i> Value
Attendance Rate	With SRO Program	20	95.02	1.22113	.518
	Without SRO Program	20	94.79	.94059	

High school graduation rate.

The Alliance for Excellent Education (2009) reported that “graduation rates are an important indicator of school performance for parents, policymakers, and other concerned community citizens” (para. 1). Therefore, when considering student achievement, graduation rates must be one of the cornerstones of high school accountability. Schools and school resource officers must take responsibility for improving student achievement through proactive measures to create a climate of accountability, safety, and success for all, rather than pursuing means of pushing low achieving students out of the classroom and into society (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2009).

Some factors that contribute to school graduation rates, either directly or indirectly are: student mobility, dropout rates, and individual student achievement.

Therefore, data for this variable were limited to the individual school district and their understanding of calculating yearly graduation rates. The average graduation rate of schools without school resource officers was 88.65%, (see Table 3). Graduation rates in schools with school resource officer programs showed a lower rate of 87.81%. In review of the graduation rates of the selected sample, 15 school districts, or approximately 37.5%, reported high school graduation rates of 90% or higher. With a *p* value of .695, there was no significant difference between schools with and schools without school resource officer programs.

Table 3

Graduation Rate

	School Districts	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	<i>p</i> Value
Graduation Rate	With SRO Program	20	87.81	5.58814	.695
	Without SRO Program	20	88.65	7.74946	

High school dropout rate.

According to Epstein and Sheldon (2002), “teenagers [who] drop out of school are [a] reflection of a long period of academic disengagement that coincides with student withdrawal from schooling, as well as other educational institutions” (p. 308). Dropout prevention has to begin with school administrators and school resource officers, monitoring absenteeism, student withdrawal, and students disconnecting from the educational process as early as elementary and middle school. According to the National Dropout Prevention Center (2004), “we tend to think of students dropping out [of school] in their last years of high school, many are lost long before that” (para. 2).

As reported by the Alliance for Excellent Education (2009), “the cost of [students] dropping out are born not just by individuals, but by the communities in which they live, and the rest of society” (para. 5). Dropouts from the class of 2008 are expected to lose over \$4.8 billion in lost wages in their lifetime (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2009). For the dropout rate, data indicated schools with school resource officers had a higher dropout rate, 2.995 %, while schools without resource officers had a lower rate, 2.317 % (see Table 4); however, consideration must be given to school demographics. Nevertheless, a *p* value of .218 indicated, statistically, school resource officers have no impact on school dropout rates.

Table 4

Dropout Rate

	School Districts	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	<i>p</i> Value
Dropout Rate	With SRO Program	20	2.9950	1.61709	.218
	Without SRO Program	20	2.3170	1.80321	

High school ACT cumulative average score.

According to the ACT News (2010), the ACT test is a universally accepted college entrance exam that is required by more four-year colleges than any other exam. Around since 1959, the ACT test is administered in 50 states and is a knowledge-based multiple choice exam, as opposed to an IQ or Aptitude test (ACT News, 2010). The ACT is a curriculum-based exam that directly relates to what students have learned in high school English, math, and science classes (ACT News, 2010).

The ACT is more than just an exam; students are presented with interest inventories which provide valuable information for students and counselors/advisors in career and educational planning (ACT News, 2010). With a maximum possible score of 36, students in 50 states participate in this exam multiple times with the intent of scoring as high as possible to obtain academic scholarships for college. The higher the individual score, the more likely student will receive academic financial aid.

In comparing schools with and without school resource officers, the ACT variable shows a somewhat higher average, 21.15%, for schools with school resource officer programs, as opposed to 20.19% for schools without. Furthermore, a p value of .004, suggests school resource officers had a significant impact on the overall academic achievement as it relates to the ACT cumulative score (see Table 5).

Table 5

ACT Scores

	School Districts	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	p Value
Cumulative ACT Scores	With SRO Program	20	21.15	.83319	.004
	Without SRO Program	20	20.19	1.13484	

Out-of-school suspensions of 10 or more days.

The implication of long term, out-of-school suspensions on graduation rates leave a lasting effect on students; allowing fewer opportunities later in life (Hausman et al., 2009). Therefore, school administrators and school resource officers are responsible for monitoring the individual effects of multiple and long term suspensions on academic

performance and the dropout rate (Benigni, 2004). With schools and legislators facing increased pressure from concerned parent and educator groups regarding the need for discipline reform, Benigni (2004) stated, “the federal government and state legislators have changed existing laws and created new ones that, in turn, have required school districts to issue mandatory suspensions and expulsions” (para. 3) Furthermore, Hausman et al. (2009) reconfirmed, “if students are not in school, they are being denied access to the required curriculum; therefore, suspensions may limit a student’s opportunities for learning” (2009).

Data gathered in relation to the variable, number of discipline incidents of students with 10 or more days of out-of school suspensions, showed that schools with school resource officer programs averaged 8.20 incidents of long term suspensions per school year. Schools without school resource officer programs averaged 9.4 incidents of long term suspensions per school year (see Table 6). While school resource officers do not make a significant difference on out-of school suspensions, at a *p* value of .784, Hausman et al. (2009) reiterated the need for frequent monitoring of students who are chronic behavior problems. Hausman et al. (2009), concluded:

Although one hopes that all schools do what is in the best interest for each and every for student, high schools may be less inclined to keep students in school [who] are not performing academically. (para. 9)

Table 6

Out-of-School Suspensions

	School Districts	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	<i>p</i> Value
Out-of-School Suspensions	With SRO Program	20	8.20	13.12974	.784
	Without SRO Program	20	9.40	14.10263	

Section II: Perception Study

In the second phase of the study, 200 superintendents from public school districts in Missouri, with populations of 2,000 students or less, were surveyed. A list of 523 school districts with enrollment figures, as well as and their superintendents' email addresses was obtained from the MASA. Surveys were emailed to school superintendents attempting to gain perceptions of school resource officer programs and the impact they have on school safety, school climate, and academic achievement. Of the 200 surveys sent, 98, or 49% responded. Superintendents were asked 10 questions and given an opportunity for response. Questions were formed around the Correlates of Effective Schools as described by Lezotte (1991). Schools with and without school resource officer programs were surveyed with instructions detailing which questions to omit.

Descriptive Statistics*Survey Question 1. What is the student population of your school district?*

According to Gelb (2002), "several scholars and organizations have studied the issue of small schools and their impact on student achievement" (para. 2). In truth, "while much of the featured research on school size during the past decade has touted smaller

schools, the issue has not been fully resolved” (Stevenson, 2006, para. 3). Although, evidence indicates that for disadvantaged students, achievement increases as school size decreases (Gelb, 2002).

With smaller schools, studies have shown improved attendance, better grades, higher test scores, lower dropout rates, and decreased disciplinary incidents (Gelb, 2002). However, according to Stevenson, (2006) “[a] growing body of evidence has accumulated that raises questions about larger schools providing better academic outcomes and whether, in fact, when all factors are considered, they are less expensive to operate” (para. 2). Superintendents responding to this survey reported 38.8% of their districts had a student population of 0-600, 43.9% reported a student population of 600-1200, and 17.3% reported a population of 1200-2000.

Survey Question 2. Please select the answer that best describes your current situation.

Our school district:

- A. Currently employs a full time school resource officer.*
- B. No longer employs a school resource officer but have in the past.*
- C. Has never employed a school resource officer.*

School resource officers were found in 21.6% of school districts responding. Furthermore, 15.5% of the superintendents reported they had at one time employed a school resource officer, but no longer retain their service. Of the schools responding, 62.9% reported they have never employed a school resource officer (see Figure 1).

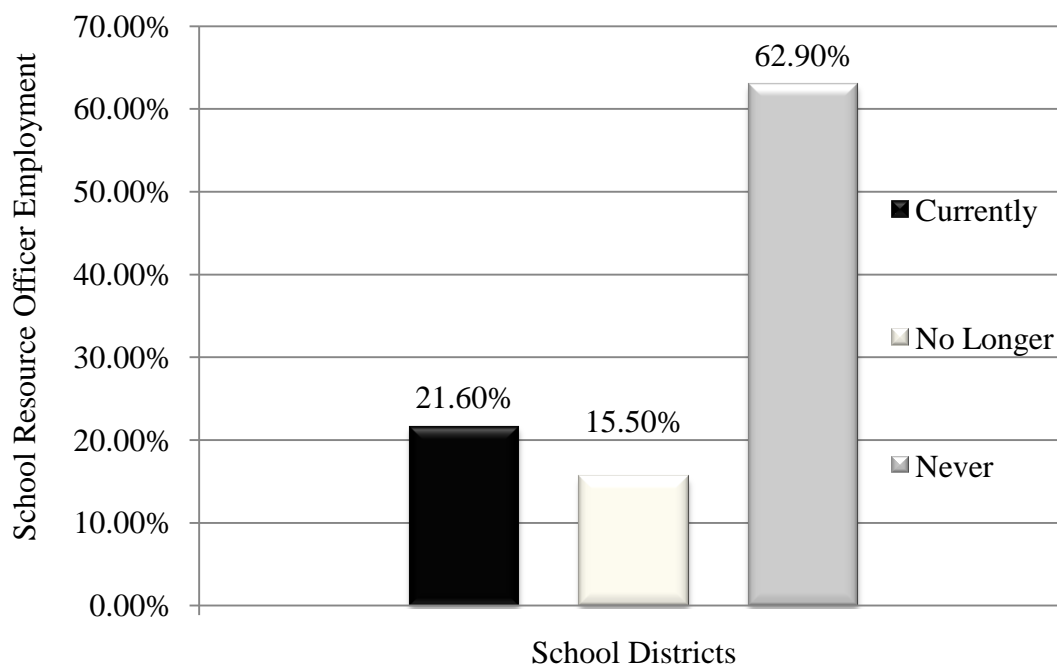


Figure 1. School resource officers employed in public school districts.

Survey Question 3. Does your school resource officer have other responsibilities i.e., coaching or supervising?

School resource officers, through community partnerships, work to create a sense of belonging in local schools. As reported by Hebert (2007), school administrators strive to include school resource officers in functions throughout the school day to help with this concern. May et al. (2004), listed possible school resource officer duties as assigned by building administrators:

- Monitor parking areas
- Monitor lunchroom activity
- Clear hallways
- Counsel students

- Assist teachers
- Transport suspended students home. (p. 182)

To give resource officers an opportunity to fit in, as well as give students a chance to see officers in a non-threatening manner, many schools are assigning officers to coaching and supervising duties (Hebert, 2007). Comments from the survey suggested that school resource officers have opportunities to apply for non-faculty coaching positions and extra-curricular activity supervision and security. Schools and communities continue to strive for a more casual approach to violence prevention, which entails the school resource officer in a more comfortable mode of supervision.

Question three was created to determine school districts' attempts to develop a school and community partnership with school resource officers by placing them in non-threatening, yet legal roles. Of the schools responding with school resource officer programs, only 14% reported assigning school resource officers to other duties, while 86 % reported limiting their resource officers to police-related roles.

Survey Question 4. Does your school district provide professional development opportunities for your school resource officer?

According to Mayer (2008), school districts must provide ongoing professional development for school resource officers, especially in the areas of positive behavioral support, counseling, and proactive problem solving. Mayer (2008) reported that National School Resource Officer surveys have indicated schools are unprepared for terrorist attacks and other serious crisis events. Therefore, school safety threats remain a concern and ongoing professional development for school resource officers for active shooter training, as well as crisis management, is a key ingredient to school safety.

Of those responding to question four, 57.1% offered professional development to their school resource officers. Consequently, 42.9% of the schools with active school resource officer programs reported they did not offer professional development, although some of those shared school resource officers with their local law enforcement agencies, which provide the needed training. Local school districts also provided professional development opportunities for faculty and staff which allowed another avenue for the school resource officers.

Survey Question 5. Is your school resource officer fully funded by the school district?

The question regarding funding the school resource officer program is determined by the value of the program pertaining to safety and academic achievement. Schools and community law enforcement agencies reap rewards from the program and in most communities, share the expense. Although as funding declines, most communities are relying on the school district to fund this program (Podgursky & Springer, 2006).

Because of increased violence in schools, local school districts are very reluctant to discontinue this program. Administrators fear the possibilities of negative press, as well as community skepticism if the program is unfunded and eliminated prior to a catastrophic event (Finn, 2006). Therefore, school leaders must persuade school boards to continue the funding of this program by reiterating the need for school safety, the quick response time in the event of a crisis, and the overall community perception of safety that the school resource officers provide to faculty, staff, and district stakeholders.

According to the survey responses, 28.6% of the school districts with school resource officer programs stated their programs were completely funded by the local school district. The 73.8% of school districts that shared costs reported writing grants,

cooperative funding with city and county law enforcement agencies, as well as developing partnerships with county commissions for funding assistance. School safety is a community issue and communities throughout Missouri are providing assistance to maintain a safe school climate and allow for teachers and students to expand knowledge in an environment conducive to learning (Pollack & Sunderman, 2001).

Perceptions of Superintendents of Schools with School Resource Officers

(Schools that do not employ a school resource officer were instructed to skip this question)

Survey Question 6. Superintendent perceptions; What is the impact of school resource officers in your district on:

- a. Student discipline?*
- b. School climate?*
- c. High expectations for students?*
- d. High expectations for staff?*
- e. Home, school, and community relations?*
- f. Maximizing learning opportunities?*
- g. Time on task?*
- h. Student and staff safety?*
- i. Student academic success?*

Lezotte (1991), with assistance from fellow researchers, Edmonds and Brookover, defined the characteristics of a successful school as a place where all children learn. This research refuted the idea that schools had no impact on learning (Effective Schools, 2008). The Correlates of Effective Schools and the placement of school resource officers

in schools may provide the means by which school climate and school safety are developed. Research of the effective schools movement explained that one of the characteristics of a successful school is the climate that surrounds the school (Effective Schools, 2008).

Student discipline.

According to the Riverside Department of Public Safety (2010), school resource officers are assigned to schools to provide a safe, school climate conducive to teaching and learning, and furthermore, to create an educational environment that is free of unruly distractions for students and teachers. Moreover, research performed by the Student Wellbeing Branch (2006) indicated that safety and good student discipline must be present for any school to be successful.

The study indicated that 82.5% of the superintendents surveyed suggested that school resource officers had either high impact (45%) or some impact (37.5%) on student discipline. Further review showed that 17.5% of the superintendents felt that school resource officers had no impact on student discipline. Therefore, school superintendents believed school resource officers impacted school discipline (see Figure 2).

School climate.

According to Morrison (2008), the development of a quality school climate will either bolster or destabilize learning, achievement, and the development of all students. Therefore, students must have a sense of safety and belonging to allow academic achievement to be attained at a level higher than expected. As stated by Walker (2006), school resource officers help create the desired school climate that allows for academic success.

In review of the superintendents' perceptions' of school resource officers' impact on school climate, 82.5% of those surveyed affirmed they felt school resource officers had either high impact (37.5%) or some impact (45.0%). Consequently, 15% of those surveyed reported there was no impact on school climate from the presence of school resource officers, while 2.5% reported a negative impact (see Figure 2).

Home, school, and community relations.

The correlates of effective schools include positive communications between home, school, and community. School resource officers are becoming a mainstay in communities and on school campuses throughout the nation in hopes of securing schools and preventing violence from impacting the future of communities (Hebert, 2007). This partnership is a key element in the relationship that is necessary for student success within the home, the school, and the community.

Regarding home, school, and community relations, 82.5% of the superintendents responding felt that school resource officers either made a high impact, (35%) or some impact (47.5%) on building a positive relationship. Conversely, 15% of the superintendents responded that school resource officers had no impact on home, school, and community relations, while 2.5% responded that officers had a negative impact. As schools and communities continue to work together for the safety and well being of their children; positive relations continue to exist (see Figure 2).

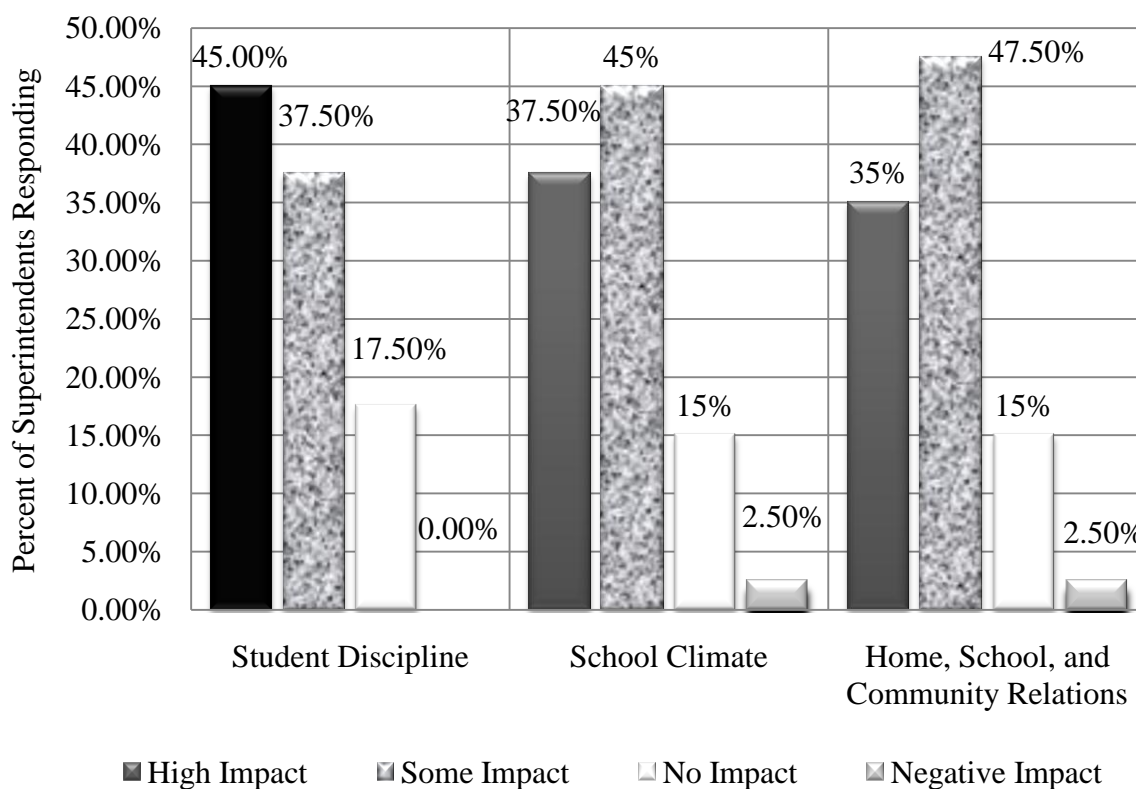


Figure 2. Superintendents of schools with school resource officer programs. Perceptions of the impact school resource officers have on student discipline; school climate; and home, school, and community relations.

High expectations of students.

From the research study, *Creating a Climate of High Expectations for Student Learning*, McEwen (2003) reported, “the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act... [mandated] that schools must show Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in making sure that all students achieve academic proficiency” (p. 1). Therefore, a learning culture developed with high expectations is a pre-requisite for academic success (McEwen, 2003). School administrators and school resource officers find it necessary to examine all aspects of academic success or failure, which may include school culture (McEwen, 2003).

In shaping the findings of perceptions of superintendents on high expectations for students, survey results indicated that 65% of superintendents perceived school resource officers to have either high impact (15%) or some impact (50%). Further analysis showed 35% of those surveyed felt school resource officers had no impact on high expectations. No school superintendents reported a negative impact (see Figure 3).

High expectations of staff.

A high expectation for all, students and staff, is a key element of the Correlates of Effective Schools, as reported by Lezotte (1991). Of the superintendents surveyed, 57.5% believed school resource officers impact high expectations of faculty and staff. Also, 42.5% perceived school resource officers had no impact, and 2.5% perceived the impact to be negative (see Figure 3).

Student and staff safety.

Research performed by Garcia-Reid, Reid, and Peterson (2005), suggested that students who do not feel safe in the classroom tend to struggle with focusing and retaining information. Schools must create a safe refuge for teachers and students with defined expected behaviors that ensure students are educated in an atmosphere that allows them to concentrate on learning activities (Garcia-Reid et al., 2005). For high academic achievement school leaders must focus on safety.

Regarding student and staff safety, 87.5% of superintendents responded that school resource officers had either a high (65%) or some (22.5%) impact. Although 12.5% of the superintendents surveyed felt that school resource officers had no impact on safety; school administrators and community leaders continue to work together on safety plans that often involves the assignment of a school resource officer (see Figure 3).

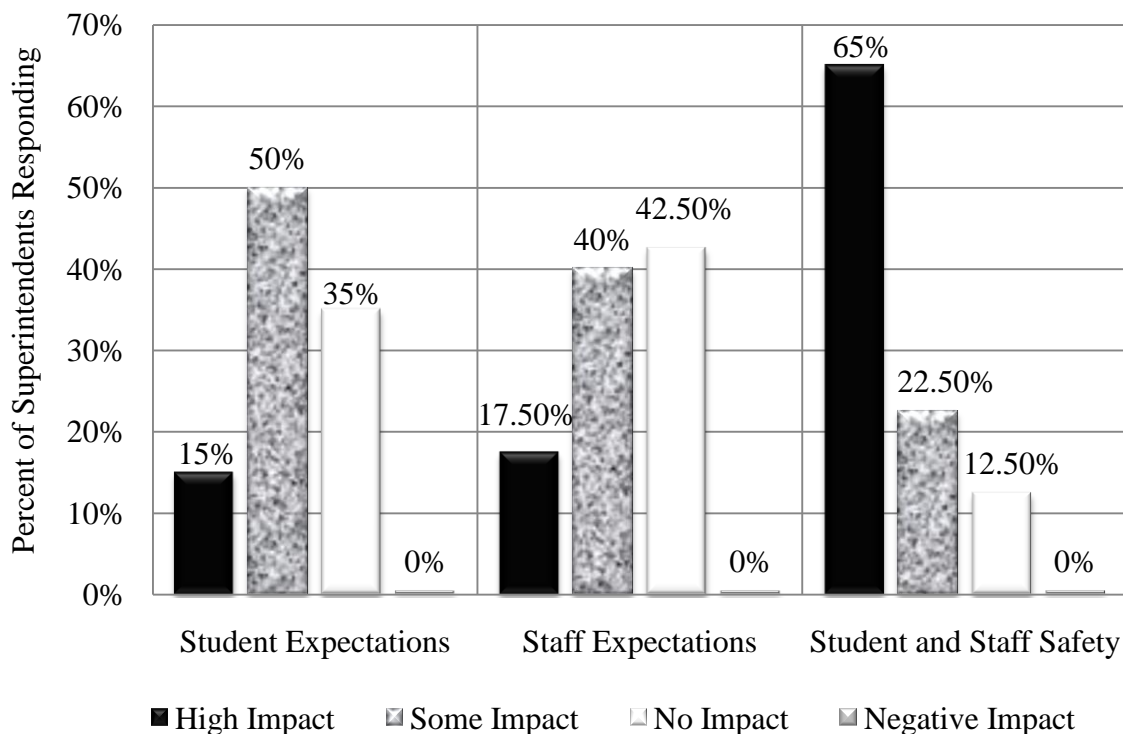


Figure 3. Superintendents of schools with SRO programs. Perceptions of the impact school resource officers have on student expectations, staff expectations, as well as student and staff safety.

Maximizing learning opportunities.

Maximizing learning opportunities involve school leaders and often times school resource officers eliminating distractions in the classroom. Furthermore, other factors that allow for maximized learning are student attendance, student discipline, and evidence of teacher learner engagement. Of the superintendents who responded, 57.5% believed school resource officers maximized learning opportunities. Conversely, 42.5% felt resource officers did not maximize learning. Comments submitted conferred school resource officers had some impact on student attendance and controlling disciplinary events, therefore allowing for more instructing and learning opportunities (see Figure 4).

Time on task.

Research on school discipline and classroom management, as reported by Mayer (2008), suggested that behavior management can reduce the amount of time teachers spend on problem behaviors, thus allowing for more classroom time devoted to education. With this thought, 55% of the superintendents perceived school resource officers did, in fact, impact time on task. There were no superintendents who felt that school resource officers impacted time on task negatively.

Data revealed that 45% of the superintendents responding claimed school resource officers had no impact on student time on task. Lezotte (1991) suggested that maximizing learning opportunities and time on task are a common characteristic of a successful school. Therefore, school leaders and school resource officers continue to maintain orderly school climates to allow for protected time on task in classrooms (see Figure 4).

Student academic success.

Ellis and Worthington (as cited in Brockman & Russell, 2009) stated that “educators’ conceptions of the successful student seem to parallel those of key business leaders” (para. 2). Successful students learn to balance the social and academic aspects; expect success; and become socially proficient, goal oriented, and intrinsically motivated (Brockman & Russell, 2009). Academically successful students will not only one day earn higher salaries; they will have a better chance of obtaining gainful employment that not only pays the rent, but is enjoyable (Brockman & Russell, 2009).

In reviewing survey results, superintendents’ responses revealed that 62.5 % believed the presence of a school resource officer impacted student academic success.

Furthermore, 10% believed they impacted academic success at a high level, while 52.5% felt school resource officers had some impact. Of the superintendents surveyed, 37.5% believed the presence of a school resource officer had no impact at all (see Figure 4).

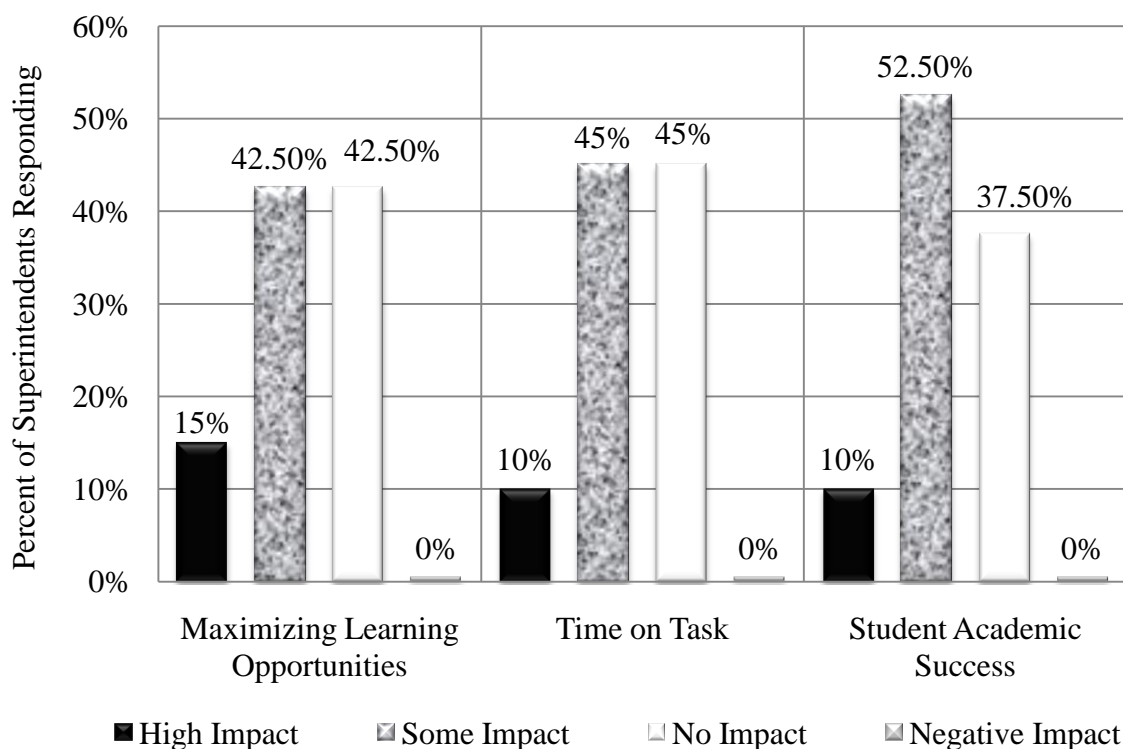


Figure 4. Superintendents of schools with school resource officer programs. Perceptions of the impact school resource officers have on maximizing learning opportunities, time on task, and student academic success.

Perceptions of Superintendents of Schools without School Resource Officers

Survey Question 7. If your district does not currently employ a full time school resource officer; if you could fund this position what is your perception of the impact the presence of a school resource officer would have in regards to the following:

- a. *Student discipline?*
- b. *School climate?*

- c. High expectations for students?*
- d. High expectations for staff?*
- e. Home, school, and community relations?*
- f. Maximizing learning opportunities?*
- g. Time on task?*
- h. Student and staff safety?*
- i. Student academic success?*

Student discipline.

Of the superintendents in districts that do not have active school resource officer programs , 88% suggested that school resource officers would have either a high impact (25%) or some impact (63.2%) on student discipline. Further review showed 11.8% of the superintendents felt that school resource officers would have no impact on student discipline (see Figure 5). Data indicated the superintendents without school resource officer programs believed the presence of this program would have an effect on student discipline.

School climate.

In review of superintendents of schools without school resource officers and their perceptions of the impact this program might have on school climate, 86.7% stated they felt school resource officers would either have a high impact (17.6%) or some impact (69.1%) on school climate. Consequently, 8.8% of those surveyed perceived there would be no impact on school climate by the placement of a school resource officer, while 4.5% reported they felt the presence of a resource officer would have a negative impact on school climate (see Figure 5).

Home, school, and community relations.

Regarding home, school, and community relations, 85.3% of the superintendents without active school resource officer programs responded they felt this program would either formulate a high impact (26.5%) or some impact (58.8%). Furthermore, 10.3% of the superintendents responded that school resource officer programs would have no impact on home, school, and community relations, while 4.4% responded that the presence of a resource officer program would have a negative impact (see Figure 5).

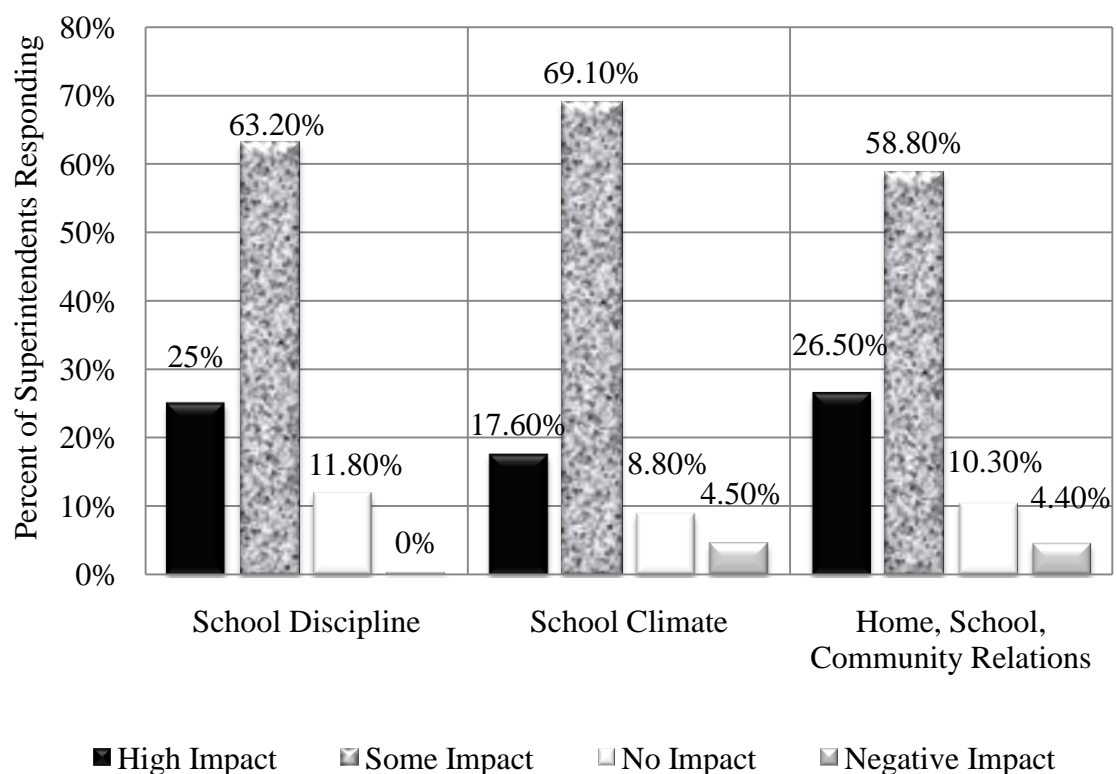


Figure 5. Superintendents of schools without school resource officer programs.

Perceptions of the impact school resource officers might have on school discipline; school climate; and school, home, community relations

High expectations of students.

Data revealed that 60.6% of superintendents of schools without school resource officer programs responded that school resource officers would have either a high impact (12.1%) or some impact (48.5%) on student expectations. Further analysis showed 39.4% of those surveyed felt that school resource officers would have no impact on student expectations. No school superintendents reported a negative impact (see Figure 6).

High expectations of staff.

Superintendents without active school resource officer programs claimed that resource officers would have an impact on faculty and staff expectations, as indicated by a 51.4% response. Consequently, 47.1% reported that school resource officers would have no impact. Furthermore, 1.5% perceived a negative impact would be detected (see Figure 6).

Student and staff safety.

Regarding student and staff safety, 91% of the superintendents in schools without active school resource officer programs believed resource officers would have either a high (50.7%) or some (40.3%) impact. Although, 9% of the superintendents surveyed felt that school resource officers would have no impact on safety. No superintendents responded a negative impact would occur (see Figure 6).

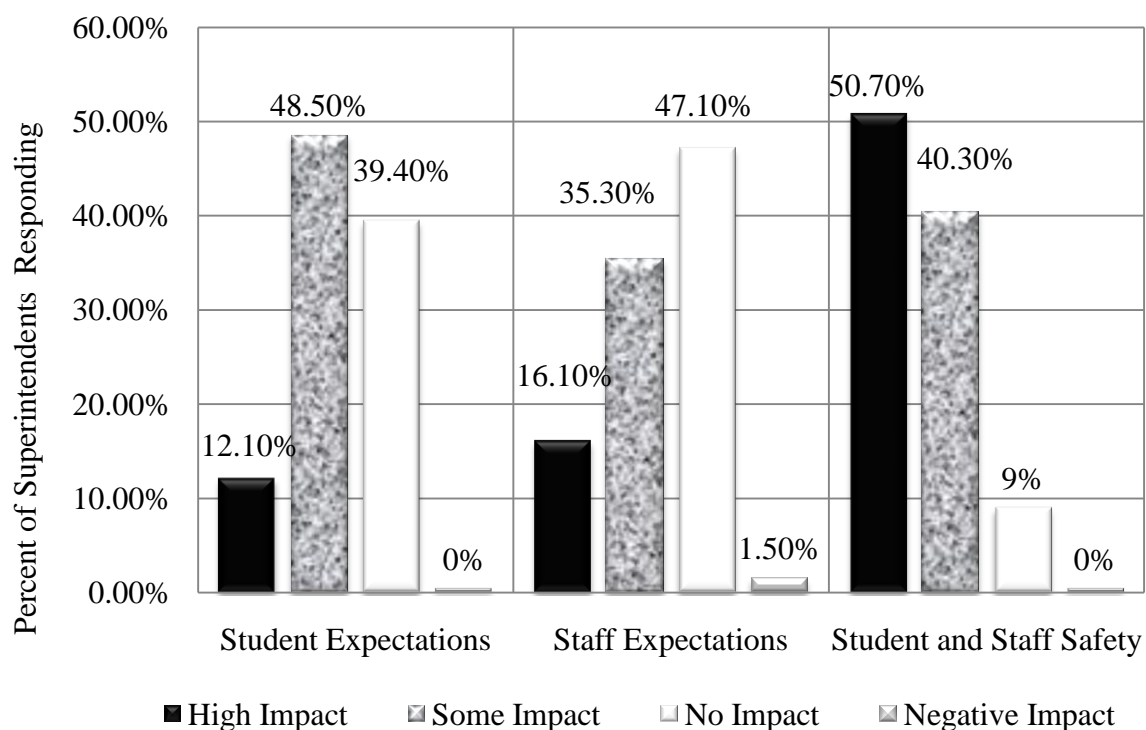


Figure 6. Superintendents of schools without school resource officer programs.

Perceptions of the impact school resource officers might have on student expectations, staff expectations, and student and staff safety.

Maximizing learning opportunities.

As reported in the survey, 50% of the superintendents of schools without school resource officer programs believed that the presence of a school resource officer would impact the maximized learning opportunities for students and teachers. Although, 50% would argue it would not. No superintendents reported a negative impact (see Figure 7).

Time on task.

Survey results showed 48.5% of the superintendents without school resource officer programs perceived school resource officers would impact time on task, with 11.7% claiming a possible high impact. Over half of the respondents, 51.5%, felt that the

presence of a school resource officer in the building would not impact student time on task. Subsequently, there were no superintendents who felt school resource officers impacted time on task negatively (see Figure 7).

Student academic success.

In reviewing survey results, 60.3% of the superintendents without school resource officer programs believed the presence of a school resource officer would impact student academic success. Furthermore, 7.4% believed academic success would be impacted at a high level, while 52.9% thought school resource officers would have some impact. Of the superintendents surveyed, 39.7% believed the presence of a school resource officer would show no impact at all (see Figure 7).

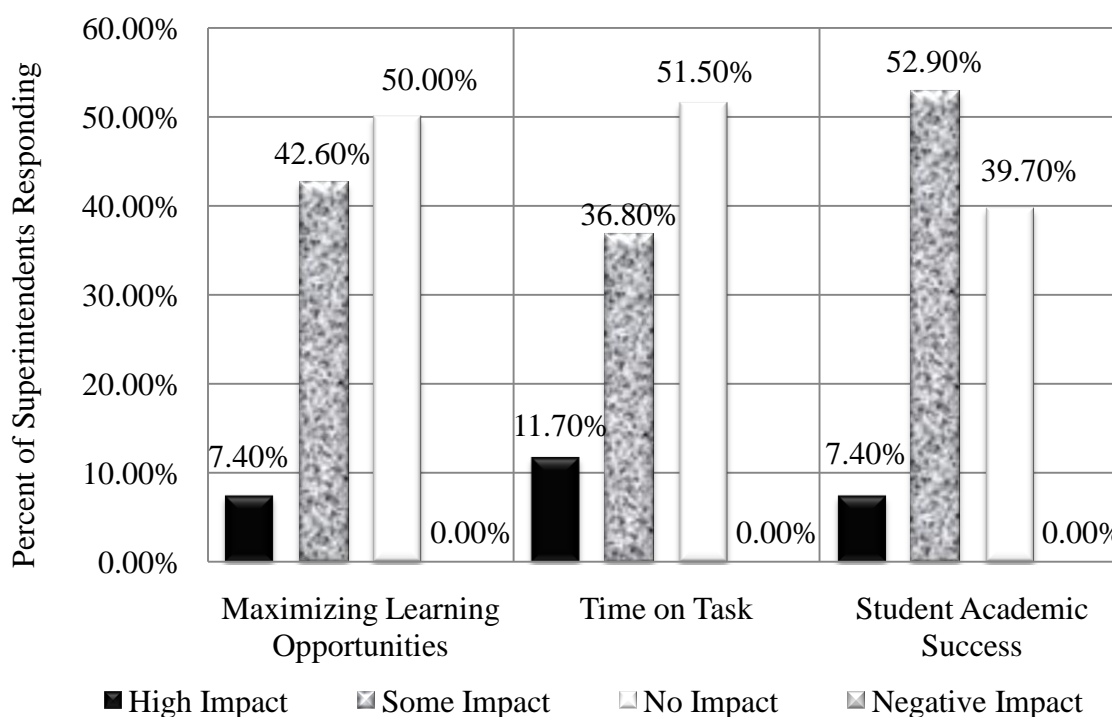


Figure 7. Superintendents of schools without school resource officer programs.

Perceptions of the impact school resource officers might have on maximizing learning opportunities, time on task, and student academic success.

Survey Question 8. If your district does not currently employ a full time school resource officer is it due to:

- a. Lack of need?*
- b. Lack of funding?*
- c. Community concern?*
- d. Other?*

School districts cite many reasons why they do not have an active school resource officer program. The most common reason is lack of funding. Of the districts without school resource officer programs that responded, 73% believed they would have a program in place if they had the funding. Lack of need was cited by 20.2% and 1.4% claimed community concern (see Figure 8).

Local police departments and schools claim that school resource officer programs are very beneficial. A school resource officer program allows local police to concentrate on patrolling the streets and responding to 911 calls instead reporting to the various numbers of incidents at schools (Finn, 2006). Furthermore, schools can feel secure in crisis situations with immediate response and timely violence prevention (Finn, 2006).

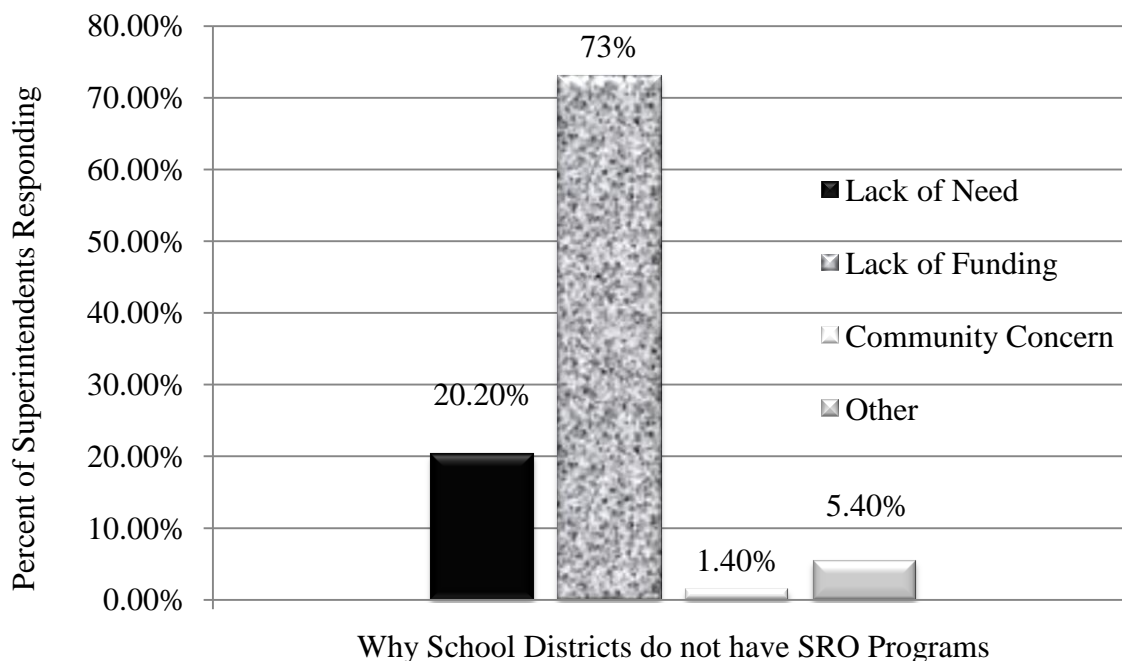


Figure 8. Reasons why schools do not have active resource officer programs.

Survey Question 9. Do you agree that the presence of a school resource officer plays a major role in the development of a safe and orderly climate?

As stated by Walker (2006), “the presence of a school resource officer placed in a public school can help create the desired environment that allows for students to achieve academic success” (p. 2). Of the 98 school superintendents responding, 80.9% believed that school resource officers played a major role in the development of a safe and orderly climate (see Figure 9). As reported by Lezotte (as cited in Taylor & Bullard, 2001):

The effective school has an orderly, purposeful, businesslike environment free from violence and threats of physical or mental harm, allowing for student behaviors that are desirable while creating an environment of interaction between the students and teachers with clear articulated expectations. (para.1)

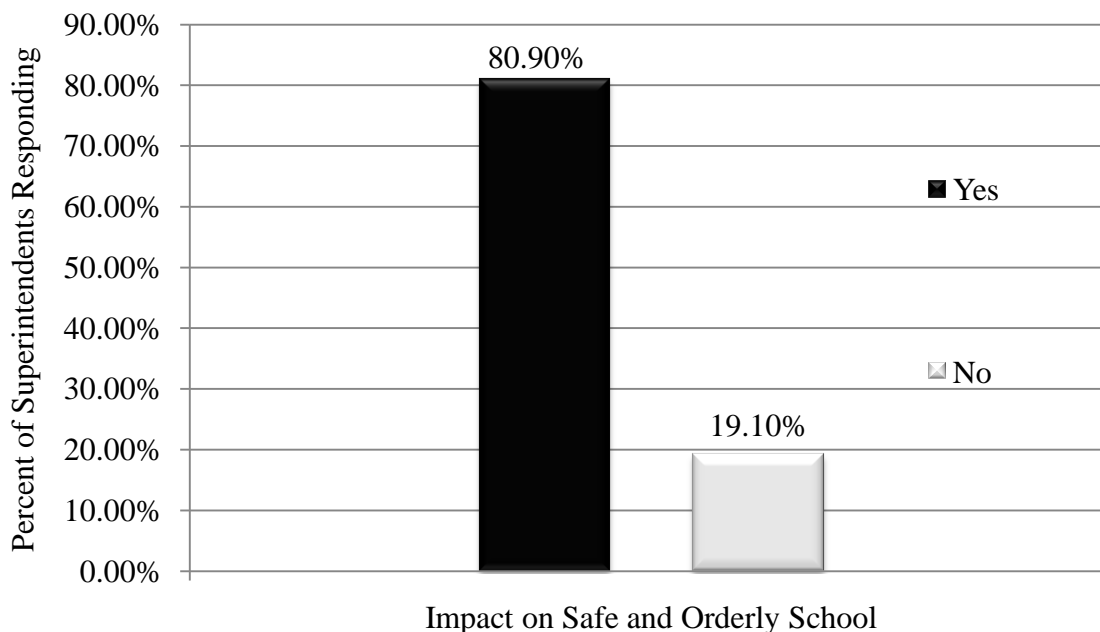


Figure 9. School resource officers' impact on safe and orderly school climate.

Survey Question 10. Do you agree that the presence of a school resource officer has a positive impact on student achievement?

With reference to the impact school resource officers have on student achievement, 63.4% of school superintendents responded they believed the presence of a school resource officer would impact student achievement. With the potential to affect many aspects of the school house, school resource officers place an emphasis on attendance, discipline, and the perception of safety to allow for students to attend schools that dedicate time to academics instead of behavioral issues (May et al., 2004). Although 36.6% believed that the presence of a school resource officer would have no impact on student achievement; comments that were given allow for conversations about an indirect impact (see Figure 10).

In examining the superintendents' comments on the survey, superintendents referred to the relationship between student achievement and the presence of a school

resource officer dependent on the individual, the feeling of safety, and a bigger picture of high expectations. Nevertheless, the overall perception of school superintendents was that the presence of a school resource officer does have some impact on student achievement.

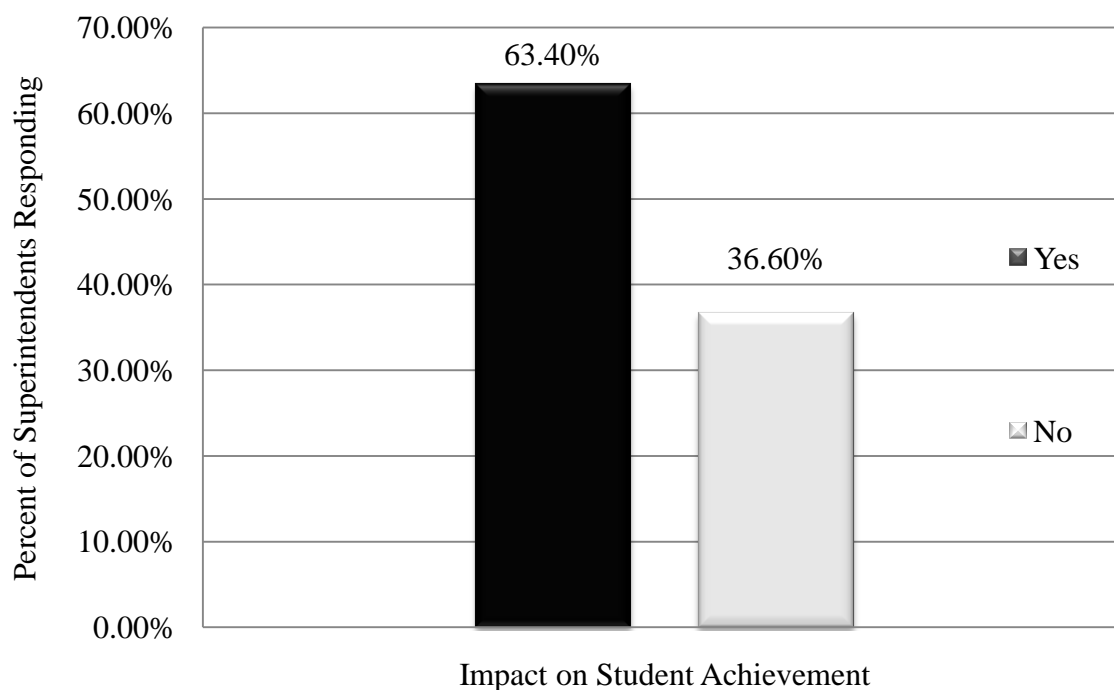


Figure 10. School resource officers impact on student achievement.

Summary

Data for this study were obtained from two major sources. For Section I, a list of schools with school resource officer programs was obtained from the MSROA. A list of public schools in Missouri was obtained and divided into two groups, those with and those without school resource officers. Once the population was defined, data were obtained from the MODESE for the selected school districts.

Section II consisted of a survey emailed to 200 public school superintendents. The survey was designed to garner the perceptions of school superintendents on the impact of school resource officers regarding safe school climate and student achievement. Surveys

were sent to superintendents of school districts with a student population of 2,000 or less and to districts with and without active school resource officer programs.

The final task consisted of analyzing data, with the use of an independent samples *t*-test, and compare schools with and schools without school resource officer programs. With defined variables, *p* values were determined to examine whether a significant difference existed between the two groups. Also, for review within the study, was demographic information on the selected groups.

Data from Section II were analyzed to form a conclusion as to the perceptions of school superintendents. Data were obtained on schools with and without school resource officers, as well as schools that previously had a school resource officer program. The findings, conclusions, and suggestions from Section I and Section II were presented in Chapter Five.

Chapter Five – Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

According to Mayer (2008), “school resource officers help reduce incidents of violence and disorder in schools; although scientific evidence in support of these findings is quite limited” (para. 3). Research is also limited on the impact school resource officers have regarding the Correlates of Effective Schools and academic success (Boyd, 2004). Therefore, to research school resource officer effectiveness, this study was designed using the basic frameworks of school improvement, as designed by Lezotte (1991).

To further the study, the perceptions of school superintendents regarding the impact of school resource officers on school climate was examined to include: school safety; student discipline; and relationships developed between school, home, and community. Additionally, the relationship between school resource officers, safe school environments, and student achievement was explored. Furthermore, the study examined the relationship between schools with school resource officers and schools without school resource officers concerning the Correlates of Effective Schools as defined by Lezotte (1991). The overarching question for this study was: Do school resource officers affect school safety and academic success?

Summary of the Findings

Hernandez and Susan (2004) suggested that school violence is a key ingredient to a climate of fear and unrest and an obstruction to the learning process. School resource officer programs are developed to provide a safe environment conducive to learning, free of violent behaviors and penalizing interruptions (Riverside Department of Public Safety, 2010). As indicated by researchers of the Student WellBeing Branch (2006), in order for schools to be successful, they must first and foremost be safe and free of distractions.

The following research questions were examined:

1. What relationship exists between the presence of a school resource officer, as related to school safety and academic success?
2. What is the perception of school superintendents regarding the impact of school resource officers and: a) the overall school climate, b) the sense of safety within the school building, c) communications between home, school, and community?

Null Hypothesis

The following null hypothesis was tested in this study:

H₀. There is no significant difference between schools with school resource officer programs and schools without a resource officer programs regarding school safety and academic success.

Alternative Hypothesis

The following alternate hypothesis was tested in this study:

H₁. There is a significant difference between schools with school resource officer programs and schools without school resource officer programs regarding high school safety and academic success.

For research purposes, this study was separated into two sections. In Section I, public school districts in Missouri with active school resource officer programs were compared to public school districts in Missouri without active school resource officer programs. Data were collected on 40 public school districts across the state of Missouri, 20 school districts with school resource officer programs and 20 school districts without. Secondary data was collected and an independent samples *t*-test was used to analyze the data.

Section II was a survey instrument created by utilizing the frameworks and characteristics of safe and effective schools. Through the survey the perceptions of superintendents in Missouri public schools regarding the impact an assigned school resource officer has on school climate and student achievement were examined. Surveys were distributed to 200 public school districts in Missouri, and 49%, or 98 superintendents responded .

Findings – Section I

Research Question 1. What relationship exists between the impact of a school resource officer, school safety, and academic success?

With the use of the SPSS data software, an independent samples *t*-test was conducted on secondary data from 40 Missouri public schools: 20 with school resource officer programs and 20 without. Topics compared were the number of standards met on the annual performance report, attendance rate, graduation rate, dropout rate, ACT scores, and number of discipline incidents of 10 or more days of out-of-school suspensions. According to the SPSS 18.0 On-Line Tutorial (2010), *p* values less than .05 demonstrates a significant difference between independent variables.

Annual performance report (APR).

With a *p* value .387, there was no significant difference in the number of standards met on the annual performance report, as generated by MODESE, Although mean scores showed a slightly higher total in schools with school resource officers, statistically, there was no difference.

Attendance rate.

With a p value of .518, it was determined there was no significant difference between schools with and schools without school resource officer programs regarding attendance rate. Although mean scores showed a somewhat higher attendance rate in schools with school resource officer programs, statistically, there was no difference.

Graduation rate.

In comparing graduation rates, data revealed that schools without school resource officer programs had a higher rate of graduation than districts with school resource officer programs. However, with a p value of .695, it was determined, statistically, there was no significant difference between the presence of school resource officers in school districts and higher graduation rates.

Dropout rate.

Students who leave school and fail to return prior to graduating are considered school dropouts. The dropout rates in schools with school resource officers showed a higher rate of students exiting before graduating. Consequently, with a p value of .218, it was determined that there was no significant difference regarding school resource officers' impact on dropout rate.

ACT scores.

According to data, the average ACT score in Missouri schools with school resource officer programs was noticeably higher. An average ACT score of 21.15 was calculated for schools with school resource officer programs, compared to 20.19 for

schools without. With a p value of .004, it was determined, statistically, there was a significant difference between the mean ACT scores from schools with school resource officers opposed to schools without school resource officers.

Out-of-school suspensions.

Although data of schools examined indicated that discipline incidents of 10 or more days of out-of-school suspensions are somewhat higher in schools without school resource officer programs, statistically, there was no difference. With a p value of .784, it was determined there was no significant difference concerning the out-of-school suspension rates of schools with or without school resource officer programs.

Findings - Section II

Research Question 2. What is the perception of school superintendents regarding the impact of a school resource officer, and;

- a. The overall school climate?*
- b. The sense of safety within the school building?*
- c. Communications between home, school, and community?*

Overall school climate.

Positive school climate promotes learning and powerfully affects student motivation (NSCC-CSEE, 2007). When asked if school resource officers have an impact on school climate, 82.5% of superintendents felt that resource officers had either a high impact (37.5%) or some impact (45%). Of the 98 superintendents responding 17.5% believed that the assignment of a school resource officer had no impact.

Superintendents' perceptions of the impact school resource officers have on the overall school climate were very comparable. Regarding student discipline,

superintendents felt that school resource officers impact the feeling of safety allowing for a more secure and violence free environment. Furthermore, if school resource officers impact school climate (82.5%) and school discipline (82.5%), superintendents believed that they must also impact high academic expectations (65%) for students and staff (57.5%).

Safety within the school building.

School superintendents who have school resource officer programs active in their districts felt resource officers have a positive impact on school safety within the school building. Examination of the data showed that 87.5% of the superintendents felt that school resource officers impact school safety, and 65% responded that the impact was high. Consequently, 12.5% of the superintendents responding felt that school resource officers have no impact on school safety.

Home, school, and community relations.

The final topic examined in relation to school climate and academic achievement was home, school, and community relations. When discussing school climate, one of the most fundamental aspects is relational practices (NSCC-CSEE, 2007). School superintendents responding felt that school resource officers had a positive impact (82.5%) on community relations. School resource officer programs have become a source of community comfort in many districts because of increased violence in schools.

Superintendents without school resource officers.

Superintendents in schools without active school resource officer programs, when asked their perceptions of school climate; school safety; and school, home, and

community relations, responded favorably. Superintendents responded that they believed school resource officers would impact the following:

- a. School discipline (88%)
- b. School climate (86.7%)
- c. Home, school, and community relations (85.3%)
- d. High expectations of students (62.1%)
- e. High expectations of staff (51.5%)
- f. Student and staff safety (91%)
- g. Maximizing learning opportunities (51.4%)
- h. Time on task (48.6%)

School resource officers' impact on academic achievement.

When examining whether or not superintendents believed school resource officers positively impacted student safety and academic achievement, superintendents again responded favorably. Of the 98 school superintendents responding, 80.9% felt that school resource officers had a positive impact on school safety. Therefore, superintendents believed that school resource officers positively impacted student achievement (63.4 %) by creating an environment conducive to learning.

Comparative Analysis

When the community of Flint, Michigan, started what is believed to be the first school resource officer program in the late 1950s, it in no way was symbolic of today's programs. The ever-changing world of education, as it relates to school safety, has evolved from a need for counseling and helping with teachers, to the necessity of crisis and violence prevention. Furthermore, with today's high accountability and school

reform, school resource officers must present a purpose dealing with student achievement. Therefore, since little research can be found linking school resource officer programs to student achievement, this study was deemed to have purpose.

The framework of this study was designed around the Correlates of Effective Schools, as presented by Lezotte (1991). These correlates are the characteristics of successful schools. Through examination of the findings of this study, school resource officers are perceived to have a positive impact on the fundamental aspects of school climate, community relations, and student achievement.

Null Hypothesis

The Null Hypothesis for this study stated there was no significant difference between schools with school resource officer programs and schools without school resource officer program regarding school safety and academic success. Through data analysis, statistically, there were no significant differences between schools with school resource officers and schools without school resource officers relating to school safety and academic success. Therefore, it was determined that there is a failure to reject the Null Hypothesis.

Alternate Hypothesis

The Alternative Hypothesis for this study stated there is a significant difference between school with school resource officer programs and schools without school resource officer programs regarding safety and academic success. Data analyzed proved there were no significant differences between schools with school resource officers and schools without school resource officers. Therefore, the Alternative Hypothesis was rejected.

Limitations of the Findings

Before the data were collected, the following limitations were identified:

1. The number of school resource officer programs active in Missouri school districts with a student population of 2,000 students or less may be limited.
2. The amount of discipline and academic data available may limit the analysis of the research.
3. District personnel completing survey may not be consistent.

Conclusions

School resource officers assigned to Missouri public schools have one priority; make the environment safe for teachers and students so learning can take place. The overarching question is: Does the presence of a school resource officer impact student achievement? The finding of this study was consistent with most school administrator beliefs. School resource officers directly impact school safety; therefore, they must indirectly impact student achievement.

An analysis of data, for both Section I and Section II, concluded, statistically, school resource officer programs had no impact upon school safety or student achievement. Although, school superintendents reported that, in their opinion, school resource officers positively impact school safety and student achievement. These findings, although contradicting, seem to be identical with the review of literature and the history of school resource officer programs.

The success or failures of all school resource officer programs are dependent upon the school and community which they are assigned. Success can only be obtained if a

partnership exists between the school and community, as well as a common vision and shared beliefs for the development of a safe and effective school climate that is structured around learning for all.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the results of this study, the following recommendations are offered:

1. The study should be expanded to include school resource officer programs outside the state of Missouri in order to obtain a larger population for comparison purposes.

2. The research should be expanded to garner the perceptions of school resource officers and community patrons as to the impact school resource officers may have on school safety and student achievement.

3. The study should be continued and school resource officer programs should be compared in different demographical areas; rural to urban and large communities to smaller communities.

4. A study of the financial aspect of the school resource officer program should be expanded to allow school districts interested in assessing the needs of their district funding options in preparation of starting a school resource officer program.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to acquire data to determine the impact a school resource officer has on school safety and student achievement. Data obtained from the MODESE were compared using schools with and without school resource officer programs. The findings illustrated no impact on school safety and student achievement.

Consequently, information obtained via a survey of Missouri public school superintendents indicated that the perception of school leaders is that school resource officers impact school safety and student achievement.

Therefore, regarding school resource officers assigned to public school districts in the state of Missouri, data reflects there is an impact on certain areas of the school safety. This study indicated, statistically, school resource officers have no direct impact on student achievement or academic success. As a result, further studies on the impact of school resource officers in public school districts regarding school safety and academic achievement are strongly suggested.

Appendix A
Lindenwood University
Institutional Review Board Disposition Report

To: John Link
CC: Dr. Sherry DeVore

Doc# 10-92

The IRB has reviewed your application for research. Your proposal has been approved without reservation.

Ricardo Delgado
Institutional Review Board Acting Chair

6/25/10
Date

Appendix B**E-mail Recruitment Letter**

<survey>

Dear Colleague,

This is an invitation for Missouri School Superintendents to participate in a survey for a research study entitled, *School Resource Officers in Missouri Public Schools: School Safety and Academic Success*. I am completing this study in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a doctorate in Educational Leadership through Lindenwood University. If you would like to participate in this study, please click here: <link> to access the letter of informed consent.

Yours truly,

John Link

Doctoral Candidate

Lindenwood University

Appendix C

Lindenwood University
School of Education
209 S. Kingshighway
St. Charles, Missouri 63301

Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities
“School Resource Officers in Missouri Public Schools:
School Safety and Academic Success”

Principal Investigator: John Link
Email: jwl363@lionmail.lindenwood.edu

Telephone: 417-736-3959

1. You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by John Link with Dr. Sherry DeVore as the Faculty Advisor for Lindenwood University. The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between a school resource officer, the correlates of a safe and effective school, and the impact the two have on student achievement.
2. a) Your participation will involve answering survey questions concerning School Resource Officer Programs. The questions will relate to School Resource Officer Programs and the perceived impact on school climate, school discipline, school safety, and student achievement.

b) The amount of time involved in your participation will be 5 – 7 minutes.

All Missouri Public School Superintendents in districts with a student population of 2,000 students or less will be invited to participate in this study.

3. There are no anticipated risks with this research.
4. There are no direct benefits for you participating in this study. However, your participation will contribute to the knowledge concerning School Resource Officer Programs and student achievement.
5. Your participation is voluntary and you may choose not to participate in this research study or to withdraw your consent at any time. You may choose not to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. You will NOT be penalized in any way should you choose not to participate or to withdraw.

6. We will do everything we can to protect your privacy. As part of this effort, your identity will not be revealed in any publication or presentation that may result from this study and the information collected will remain in the possession of the investigator in a safe location for five years then destroyed.

7. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, or if any problems arise, you may call the Investigator, John Link (417) 736-3959 or the Faculty Advisor, Dr. Sherry DeVore (417) 881-0009. You may also ask questions of or state concerns regarding your participation to the Lindenwood Institutional Review Board (IRB) through contacting Dr. Jann Weitzel, Vice President for Academic Affairs at 636-949-4846.

By completing the survey, you consent to participate in this study.

Thank you for your time,

John Link _____

Date _____

Please click here <hyperlink> to complete the survey.

Appendix D

School Resource Officer Survey

(Survey will be reconstructed with the use of the on-line survey instrument Survey Monkey)

Please answer **and** provide needed information for the following questions.

1. What is the student population of your school district?
 - a. 0-600 b. 601-1200 c. 1201-2000

2. Please select the answer that best describes your current situation.
 Our school district:
 - a. Currently employs a full time school resource officer.
 - b. No longer employs a school resource officer but has in the past.
 - c. Has never employed a school resource officer. If this is your answer please skip to Question 7.

3. Does your school resource officer have other responsibilities (Example: coaching or supervising)?

4. Does your school district provide professional development opportunities for your school resource officer?

5. Is your school resource officer fully funded by the school district?

For the following questions, please select the answer that supports your perception.

Positive Impact Some Impact No Impact Negative Impact

6. Superintendent Perception – The impact of school resource officers in your district on:
 - a. Student Discipline

- b. School Climate
 - c. High Expectations of Students
 - d. High Expectations of Staff
 - e. Home, School, and Community Relations
 - f. Maximizing Learning Opportunities
 - g. Time on Task
 - h. Student and Staff Safety
 - i. Student Academic Success
7. If your district does not currently employ a full time school resource officer: What is your perception of the impact the presence of a school resource officer would have in regards to the following:

High Impact Some Impact No Impact Negative Impact

- a. Student Discipline
- b. School Climate
- c. High Expectations of Students
- d. High Expectations of Staff
- e. Home, School, and Community Relations
- f. Maximizing Learning Opportunities
- g. Time on Task
- h. Student and Staff Safety
- i. Student Academic Success

8. If your district does not currently employ a full time school resource officer is it due to:
 - a. Lack of need
 - b. Lack of funding
 - c. Community Concern
 - d. Other
9. Do you agree that the presence of a school resource officer has a positive impact in the development of a safe and orderly school climate?
10. Do you agree that the presence of a school resource officer has a positive impact on student achievement?

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