

# Policing America's Educational Systems

The presence of law enforcement in schools has become increasingly common in recent years. In the wake of school shootings and other incidents of violence, many schools have turned to police officers to provide security and protect students. However, the role of law enforcement in schools is a complex and controversial one. Critics argue that police officers create a hostile environment for students, especially students of color, and that their presence can lead to the criminalization of minor offenses.

In this article, we will explore the history of school policing, the current state of affairs, and the debates surrounding the future of this practice. We will draw on research, interviews, and personal anecdotes to provide a comprehensive overview of this important issue.



## Policing America's Educational Systems

by John Harrison Watts

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## The History of School Policing

The history of school policing in the United States can be traced back to the early 1900s. In the aftermath of a series of high-profile school shootings, many schools began to hire police officers to provide security. By the 1950s, school policing had become a common practice in many urban areas.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the role of law enforcement in schools expanded significantly. In response to the civil rights movement, many schools hired police officers to quell student protests and enforce discipline. This led to a sharp increase in the number of students who were arrested and suspended from school.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the war on drugs led to a further increase in the presence of law enforcement in schools. Many schools began to implement zero-tolerance policies, which mandated harsh punishments for even minor drug offenses. This led to a dramatic increase in the number of students who were arrested and expelled from school.

### **The Current State of Affairs**

Today, there are an estimated 1.3 million police officers working in schools across the United States. This number has increased significantly in recent years, especially in the wake of school shootings.

The role of law enforcement in schools varies from district to district. In some schools, police officers are primarily responsible for security. In other schools, they are also involved in discipline and counseling.

### **The Debates Surrounding the Future of School Policing**

There is a growing debate surrounding the future of school policing. Critics argue that police officers create a hostile environment for students, especially students of color. They also argue that the presence of law enforcement can lead to the criminalization of minor offenses.

Supporters of school policing argue that police officers are necessary to provide security and protect students. They also argue that police officers can help to build relationships between students and law enforcement.

The debate over school policing is likely to continue for many years to come. It is a complex issue with no easy answers. However, it is an important issue to consider, especially in light of the recent increase in school shootings and other incidents of violence.

The role of law enforcement in schools is a complex and controversial one. There are strong arguments to be made both for and against the presence of police officers in schools. Ultimately, the decision of whether or not to have police officers in schools is a local one.

However, it is important to remember that school policing is just one part of a larger system that is failing to meet the needs of many students. We need to invest in our schools and provide all students with the resources they need to succeed. We also need to address the root causes of crime and violence, such as poverty and lack of opportunity.

Only then can we create a safe and supportive learning environment for all students.

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