The Expanding Presence of Law Enforcement in Florida Schools

F. Chris Curran, PhD

UF College of Education

UF Education Policy Research Center

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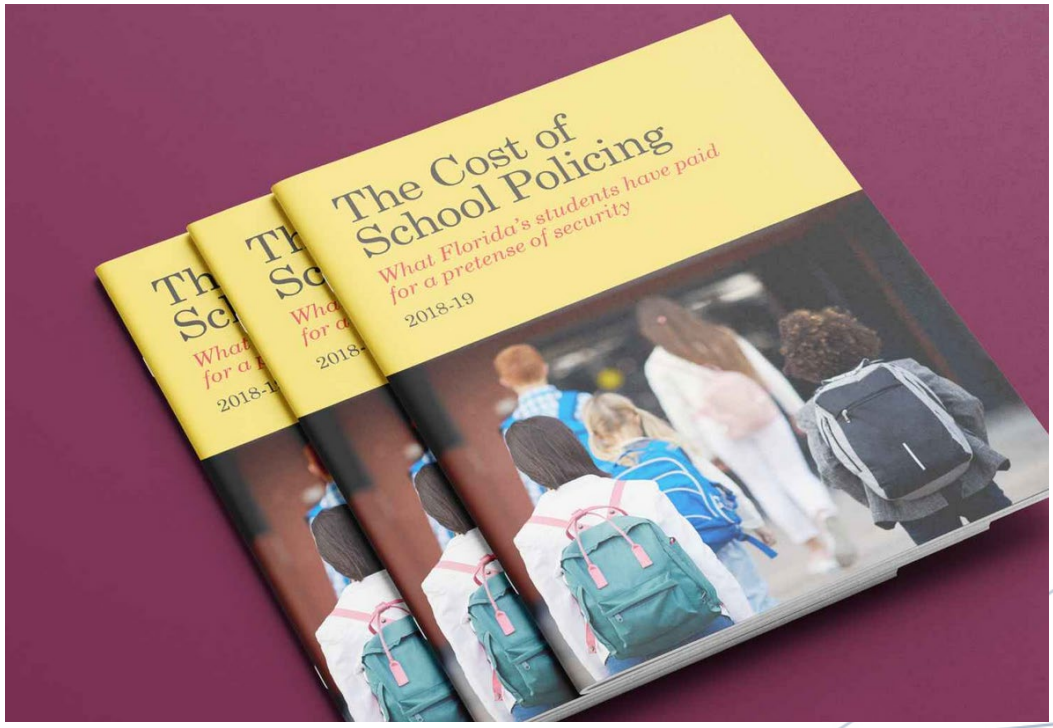


School Safety

- Schools are generally very safe

% of students afraid of attack or harm at school

12% in 1995

3% in 2015

"Between July 1, 2014, and June 30, 2015, a total of 20 of the 1,168 homicides of school-age youth (ages 5–18) occurred at school"

% of students carrying a weapon at school in last 30 days

12% in 1993

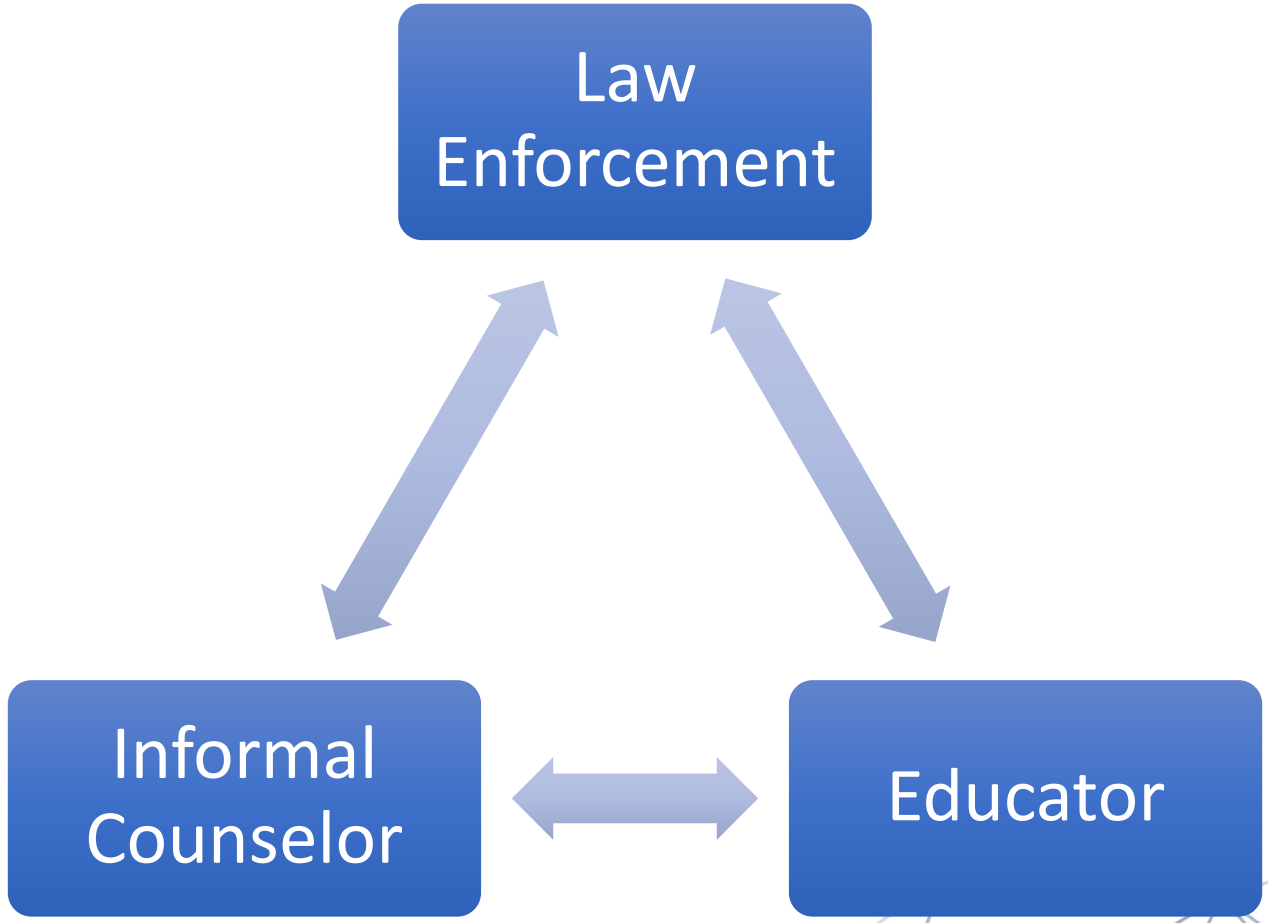
4% in 2017

(Musu-Gillette, et al., 2018; 2019)

Defining School-Based Law Enforcement

- Law enforcement
- Police
- School resource officers (SROs)

What Police do in Schools

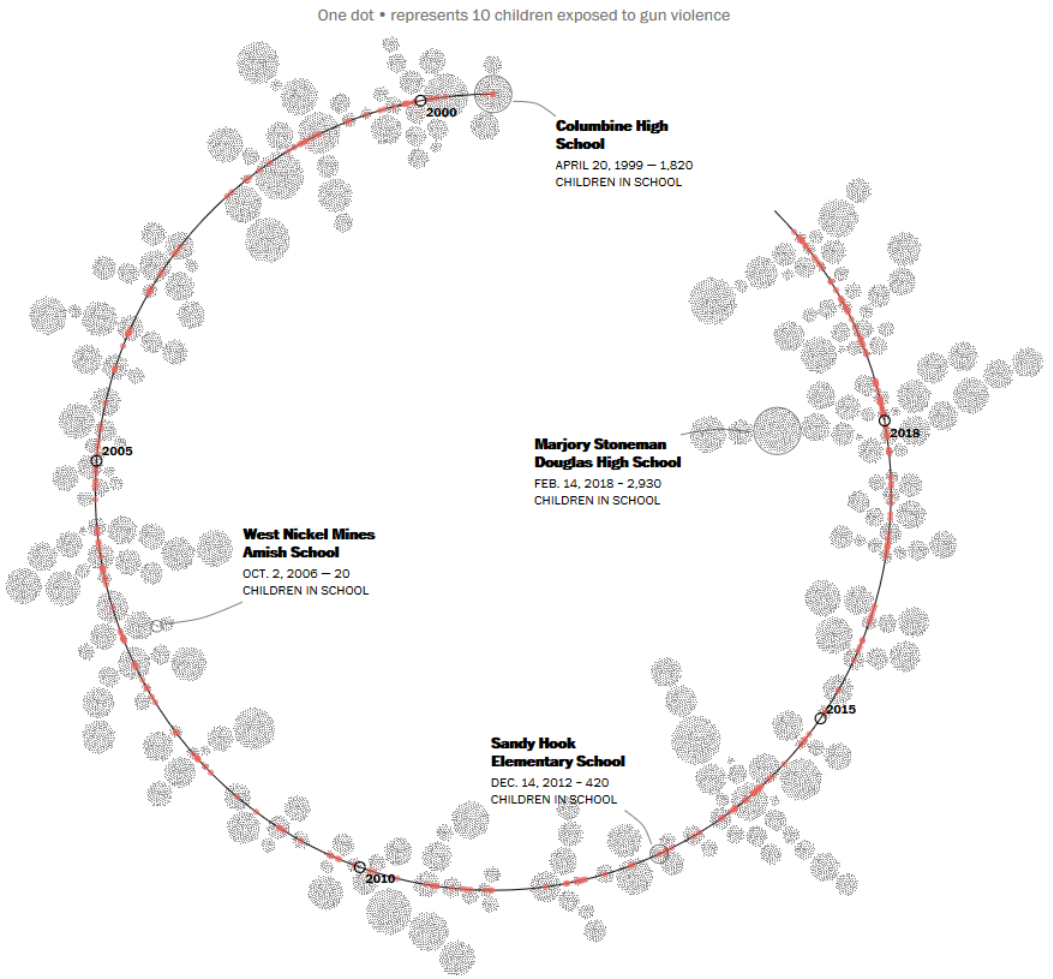


(Canady, James, & Nease, 2012)

Policing and School Shootings

37%

of school shootings since 1999 have occurred with police present



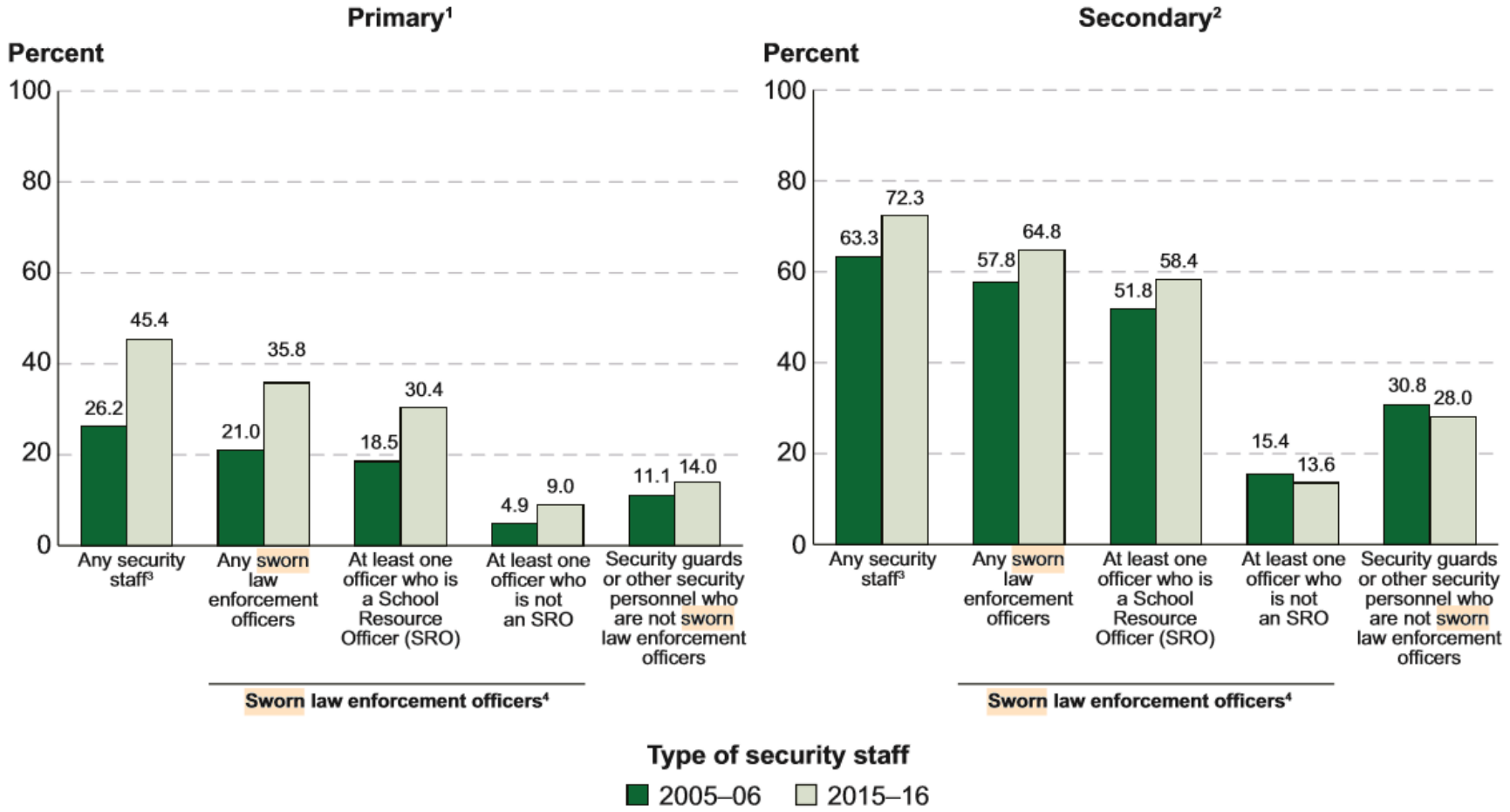
https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2018/local/school-shootings-database/

Prior Research

- Research on SROs generally finds undesirable effects
  - Increased suspensions (Fisher & Hennessy, 2016; Kupchik, 2010; Weisburst, 2019)
  - Greater likelihood of arrests (Owens, 2017)
  - Mixed evidence on safety (Owens, 2017; Petrosino et al., Forthcoming; Theriot & Orme, 2014)

Police in Schools

- Police presence has expanded over time (Musu-Gillette et al., 2018)



Police in Florida Schools

48%

of FL public schools reported law enforcement in 2013-14

(Civil Rights Data Collection, 2014)

- The 2018 Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act requires all public schools in the state to have either:
  - Sworn law enforcement (SRO or otherwise),
  - Armed private security,
  - Or, armed school staff (guardian program)

The Current Study

- Examines relationship between law enforcement presence in FL schools and outcomes of:
  - Behavioral incidents reported by schools
  - Behavioral incidents reported to law enforcement
  - School arrests
  - Suspensions

Data

- Longitudinal district and school-level data from 2014-15 to 2018-19 school years
- Census for district-level
- School-level covered 84% of districts and 64% of schools

Data

- Independent variables
  - Number of schools with law enforcement (district-level)
  - Binary indicator of law enforcement presence (school-level)

- Dependent variables
  - Behavioral incidents reported to state (SESIR)
  - Behavioral incidents reported to law enforcement (SESIR)
  - School arrests (Florida DJJ)
  - School suspensions (Florida DOE)

Analytic Approach

- Panel regression model with time-varying observable controls, district/school fixed-effects and year fixed-effects

- $y_{st} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 LawEnforcement_{st} + \beta_2 \theta_{st} + \beta_3 \mu_s + \beta_4 \lambda_t + e$

- LawEnforcement = Key IV
- θ = Observable district/school characteristics
- μ = Academic year FE
- λ = District/school FE

Analytic Approach

- Primary results use
  - Logged versions of outcomes for district-level
  - Conditional fixed effects negative binomial regression for school-level (IRR)

- In each, results can be interpreted in terms of percentage changes in the outcomes

Descriptive Findings

- Police presence increased significantly following the 2018 Act

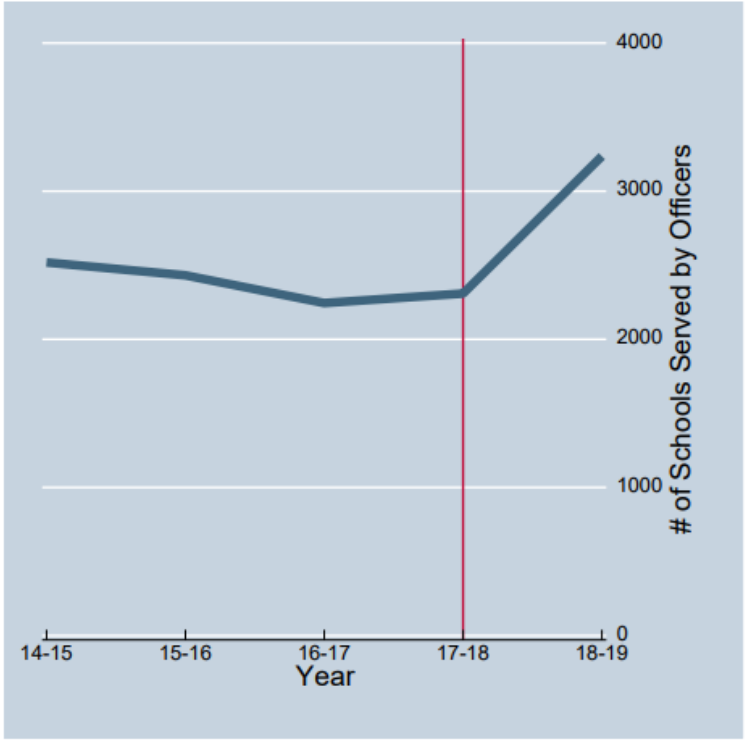


Figure 1. Number of FL schools served by school law enforcement from 2014-15 to 2018-19

Source: School district reports to state Safe Schools Appropriation Expenditure Reports

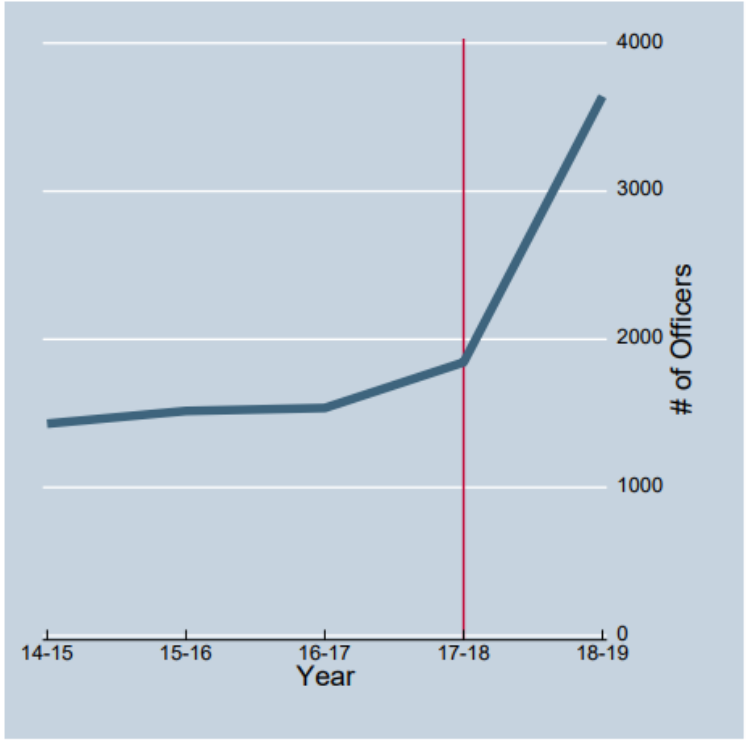


Figure 2. Number of school law enforcement in state of FL from 2014-15 to 2018-19

Source: School district reports to state Safe Schools Appropriation Expenditure Reports

Descriptive Findings

- Increase was almost entirely at the elementary level

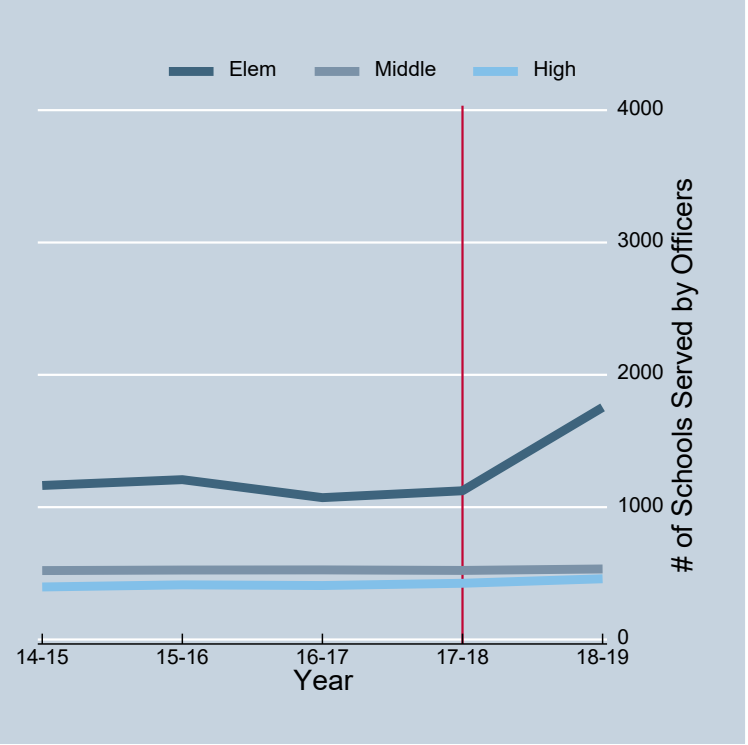


Figure 4. Number of FL schools served by school law enforcement from 2014-15 to 2018-19 school years by school level

Source: School district reports to state Safe Schools Appropriation Expenditure Reports

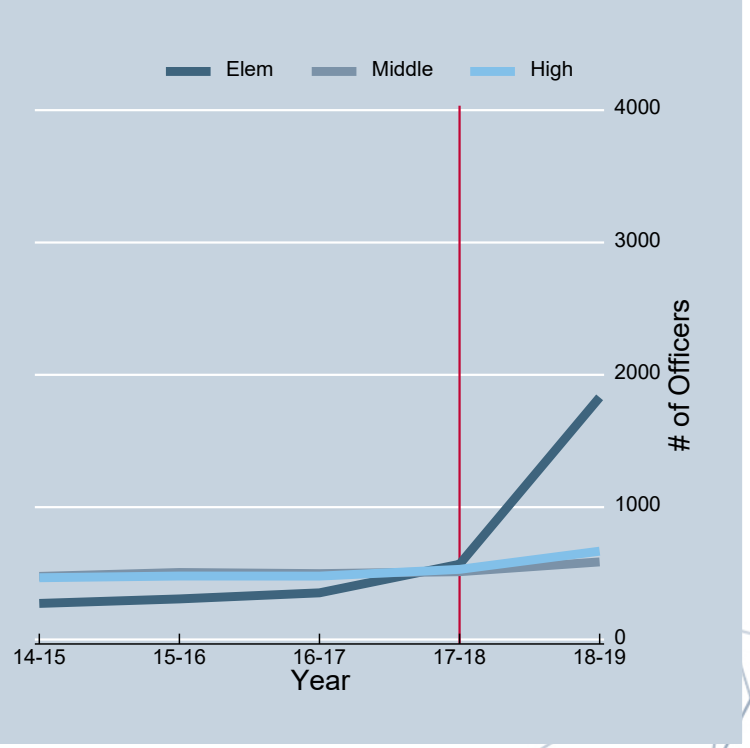


Figure 5. Number of school law enforcement in state of FL from 2014-15 to 2018-19 school years by school level

Source: School district reports to state Safe Schools Appropriation Expenditure Reports

Descriptive Findings

- Behavioral incidents reported to the state and to law enforcement increased
- Particularly pronounced for lower level offenses

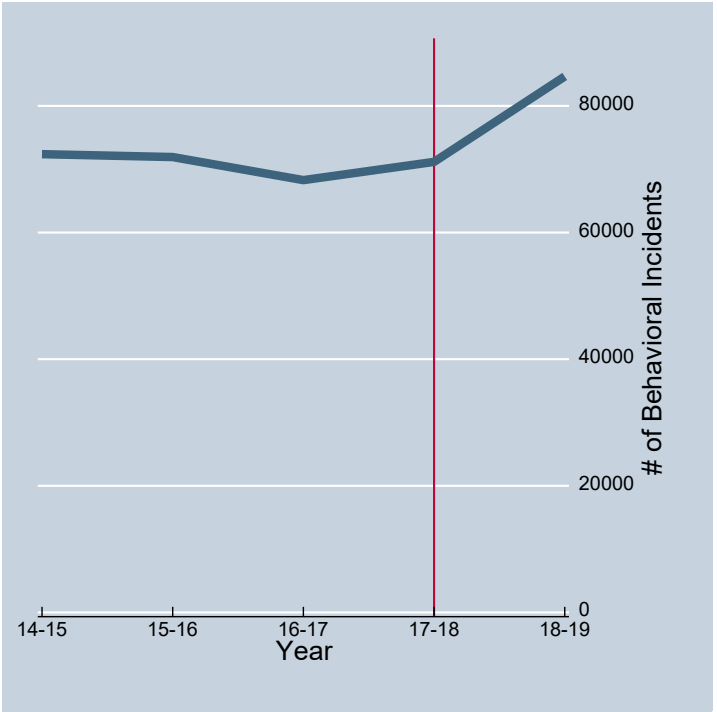


Figure 6. Number of reported behavioral incidents in state of FL from 2014-15 to 2018-19 school years

Source: School district reports to FL DOE

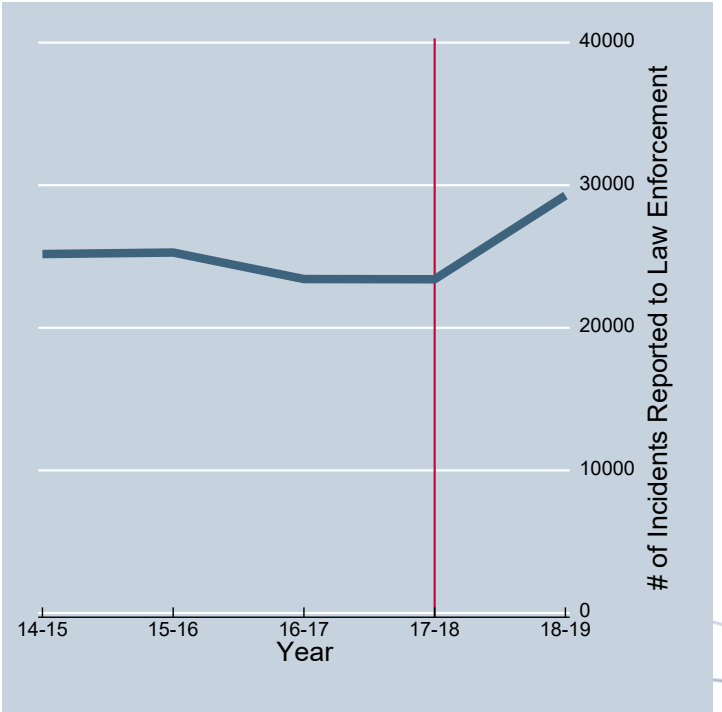


Figure 8. Number of behavioral incidents reported to law enforcement in state of FL from 2014-15 to 2018-19 school years

Source: School district reports to FL DOE

Descriptive Findings

- School arrests increased following several years of decline
- Increase largest for white students

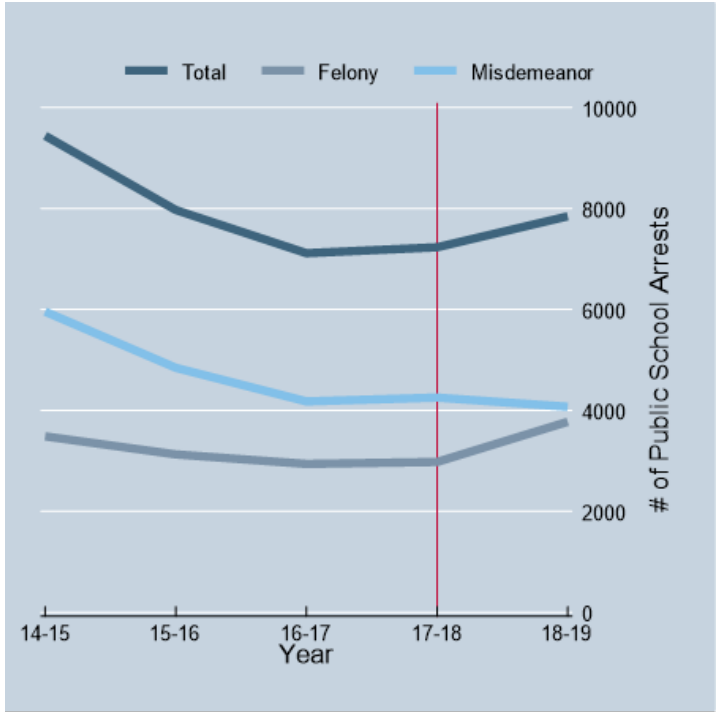


Figure 10. Number of public school arrests in state of FL from 2014-15 to 2018-19 school years
Source: Florida DJJ

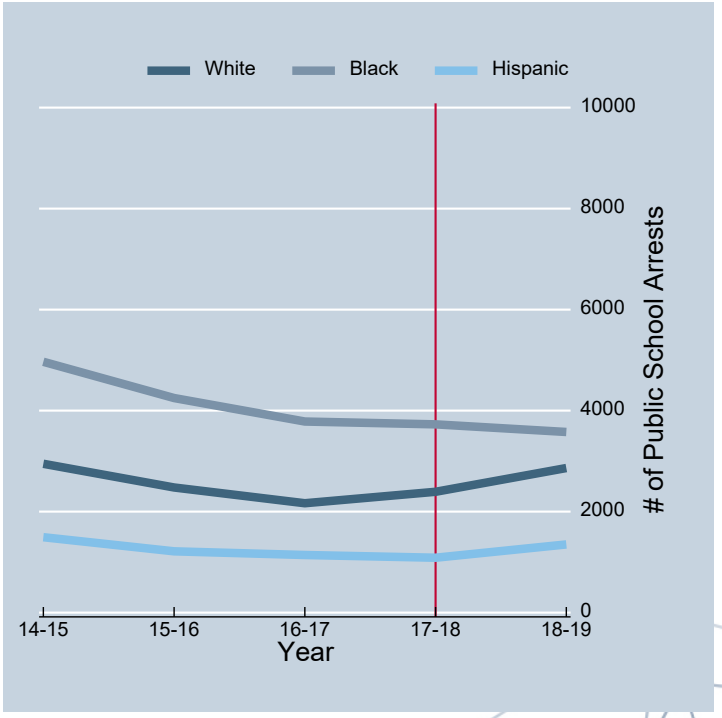


Figure 11. Number of public school arrests in state of FL from 2014-15 to 2018-19 school years by race/ethnicity
Source: Florida DJJ

Descriptive Findings

- OSS and ISS increased
- Similar increases across race/ethnicity

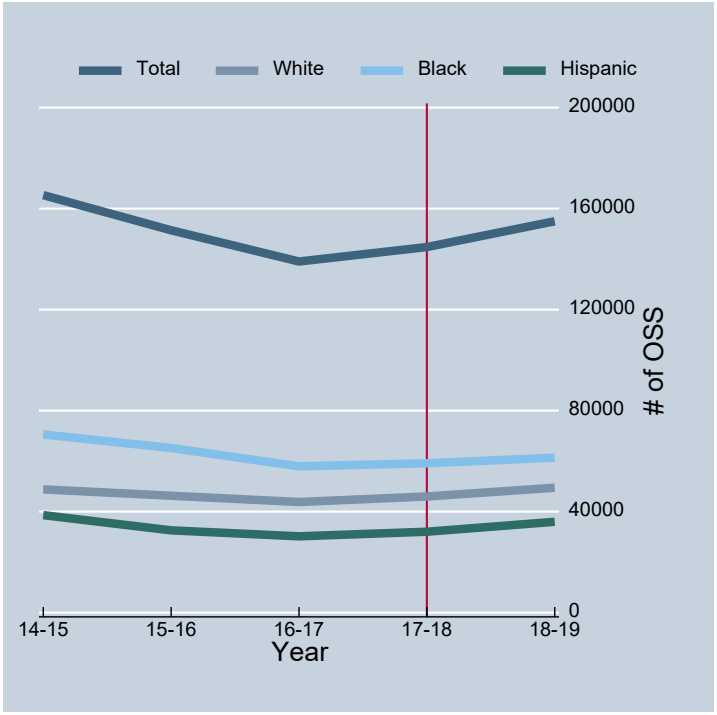


Figure 12. Number of out-of-school suspensions in state of FL from 2014-15 to 2018-19 school years overall and by race
Source: School district reports to FL DOE

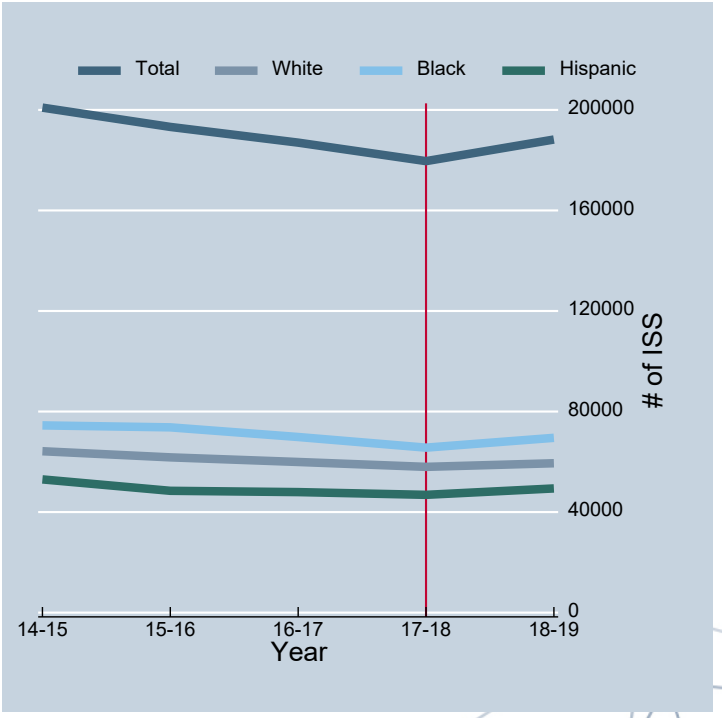


Figure 13. Number of in-school suspensions in state of FL from 2014-15 to 2018-19 school years overall and by race
Source: School district reports to FL DOE

Results – Behavioral Incidents

Table 13. Regression coefficients and standard errors from models predicting behavioral incidents from officer presence for district-level and school-level analyses overall and by incident severity level

	Total Incidents		Level 1		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Panel A: District-Level Analysis										
# Schools Served	0.00337**	0.00143*	5.09e-05	-0.00129*	0.00562**	0.00370**	0.00305*	0.00136+	0.00263*	0.000182
	(0.00112)	(0.000612)	(0.00258)	(0.000600)	(0.00132)	(0.000637)	(0.00119)	(0.000810)	(0.00104)	(0.000412)
Constant	4.225**	-0.424	-0.980	-11.46**	-0.299	-3.136	2.893**	-6.175+	4.403**	5.482+
	(1.031)	(2.759)	(1.605)	(4.109)	(3.034)	(6.367)	(0.832)	(3.533)	(0.971)	(3.274)
Observable Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
District FE		Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes
Observations	335	335	309	309	329	329	335	335	331	331
Panel B: School-Level Analysis										
Officer Served	1.385**	1.024	1.642**	0.978	1.429**	1.230**	1.513**	1.006	1.273**	0.933
	(0.0359)	(0.0419)	(0.116)	(0.122)	(0.0643)	(0.0977)	(0.0458)	(0.0482)	(0.0455)	(0.0590)
Constant	0.169**	0.887	0.0258**	0.488+	0.0659**	0.355**	0.111**	0.858	0.200**	0.985
	(0.00890)	(0.104)	(0.00370)	(0.207)	(0.00595)	(0.0742)	(0.00657)	(0.115)	(0.0142)	(0.170)
Observable Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
District FE	Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes	
School Fixed Effects		Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes
Observations	9,609	9,002	9,609	4,535	9,609	6,887	9,609	8,467	9,609	7,918

Note. Standard errors in parentheses. SE are clustered in district-level analysis. Sample sizes vary due to some districts with zero disciplinary incidents for outcome which is undefined when log transformed and some schools with all zero outcomes over time. Results in Panel A are from OLS regression with log transformed outcome, and results in Panel B are incidence rate ratios from conditional fixed effect negative binomial regressions. ** p<0.01, * p<0.05, + p<0.1

Results – Behavioral Incidents

- District-level
  - If the average size district in the state had no schools with officers as compared to all schools with officers, there would be approximately 85 to 200 fewer behavioral incidents reported per year in that district.
- School-level
  - With school FE, no significant relationship with behavioral incidents

Results – Incidents Reported to Police

Table 14. Regression coefficients and standard errors from models predicting behavioral incidents reported to law enforcement from officer presence for district-level and school-level analyses overall and by incident severity level

	Reports to Law Enf.		Level 1		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Panel A: District-Level Analysis										
# Schools Served	0.00312**	0.00110**	2.69e-05	-0.00130*	0.00501**	0.00295**	0.00286*	0.000907*	0.00572**	0.00400**
	(0.00115)	(0.000319)	(0.00257)	(0.000616)	(0.000902)	(0.000418)	(0.00114)	(0.000382)	(0.00186)	(0.00115)
Constant	2.127+	0.934	-0.996	-11.65**	-0.633	3.052	1.244	0.478	-5.147**	6.696
	(1.123)	(4.655)	(1.618)	(4.212)	(1.257)	(5.946)	(1.214)	(5.324)	(1.841)	(6.286)
Observable Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
District Fixed Effects		Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes
Observations	335	335	308	308	319	319	333	333	296	296
Panel B: School-Level Analysis										
Officer Served	1.648**	1.257**	1.655**	0.988	1.981**	1.354**	1.483**	1.186*	1.745**	1.692**
	(0.0572)	(0.0728)	(0.118)	(0.124)	(0.114)	(0.147)	(0.0603)	(0.0821)	(0.138)	(0.233)
Constant	0.0946**	0.900	0.0250**	0.500	0.0794**	0.545+	0.0785**	1.078	0.0567**	0.350**
	(0.00628)	(0.155)	(0.00362)	(0.216)	(0.00865)	(0.183)	(0.00590)	(0.217)	(0.00740)	(0.115)
Observable Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
District Fixed Effects	Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes	
School Fixed Effects		Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes
Observations	9,609	7,881	9,609	4,474	9,594	5,975	9,609	7,008	9,594	4,121

Note. Standard errors in parentheses. SE are clustered in district-level analysis. Sample sizes vary due to some districts with zero disciplinary incidents for outcome which is undefined when log transformed and some schools with all zero outcomes over time. Results in Panel A are from OLS regression with log transformed outcome, and results in Panel B are incidence rate ratios from conditional fixed effect negative binomial regressions. ** p<0.01, * p<0.05, + p<0.1

Results – Incidents Reported to Police

- District-level
  - If the average size district in the state had no schools with officers as compared to all schools with officers, there would be between 6-17% fewer incidents reported to law enforcement or between 23 to 65 fewer incidents reported annually by such a district.
- School-level
  - 2.12 to 5.35 additional incidents reported to law enforcement per year per school for a school with an officer

Results – School Arrests

Table 15. Regression coefficients and standard errors from models predicting public school arrests from officer presence for district-level and school-level analyses

	Total Arrests		Felonies		Misdemeanors		White		Black		Hispanic	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
Panel A: District-Level Analysis												
# Schools Served	0.00167+	0.000713	0.00128	0.000145	0.00212*	0.00162	0.00351*	0.00150	0.00145+	0.000905	0.00223+	0.00116
	(0.000904)	(0.000795)	(0.000829)	(0.000691)	(0.00106)	(0.00108)	(0.00152)	(0.00145)	(0.000861)	(0.000684)	(0.00120)	(0.000998)
Constant	-0.515	1.883	-0.521	-0.0800	-2.012*	1.308	-3.361**	-1.002	-2.320*	0.331	-4.729**	-1.460
	(0.780)	(4.315)	(0.778)	(4.135)	(0.896)	(4.840)	(0.967)	(5.978)	(0.966)	(3.483)	(1.037)	(6.613)
Observable Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
District FE		Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes
Observations	331	331	319	319	327	327	326	326	313	313	243	243
Panel B: School-Level Analysis												
Officer Served	1.823**	1.401**	1.676**	1.439**	2.038**	1.399*	1.875**	1.376*	1.751**	1.136	2.069**	1.306
	(0.105)	(0.141)	(0.121)	(0.183)	(0.157)	(0.189)	(0.151)	(0.198)	(0.134)	(0.150)	(0.293)	(0.320)
Constant	0.0383**	0.862	0.0410**	0.400*	0.0248**	0.729	0.0628**	0.929	0.0138**	0.720	0.0126**	1.407
	(0.00406)	(0.243)	(0.00548)	(0.169)	(0.00326)	(0.242)	(0.00870)	(0.385)	(0.00201)	(0.302)	(0.00271)	(2.053)
Observable Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
District FE	Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes	
School Fixed Effects		Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes
Observations	9,609	5,517	9,609	4,750	9,609	4,431	9,549	4,214	9,609	4,289	9,372	2,915

Note. Standard errors in parentheses. SE are clustered in district-level analysis. Sample sizes vary due to some districts with zero disciplinary incidents for outcome which is undefined when log transformed and some schools with all zero outcomes over time. Results in Panel A are from OLS regression with log transformed outcome, and results in Panel B are incidence rate ratios from conditional fixed effect negative binomial regressions. ** p<0.01, * p<0.05, + p<0.1

Results – School Arrests

- District-level
  - Not consistently statistically significant
- School-level
  - Across the average sized district, the difference in arrests if the district had no law enforcement relative to having law enforcement in all schools would therefore equate to about 55 to 110 fewer arrests per year.

Results – School Discipline

Table 16. Regression coefficients and standard errors from models predicting disciplinary outcomes from officer presence for district-level and school-level analyses

	OSS		ISS		OSS - White		OSS - Black		OSS - Hispanic	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Panel A: District-Level Analysis										
# Schools Served	0.00246	0.000325	0.00184+	-0.000256	0.00289	-0.000153	0.00220	0.000384	0.00316+	-6.36e-05
	(0.00170)	(0.00109)	(0.000989)	(0.000368)	(0.00202)	(0.00101)	(0.00197)	(0.00130)	(0.00189)	(0.00109)
Constant	2.811*	-8.648	4.410**	4.836+	2.385+	-6.660	0.167	-15.68+	-1.831	-7.619
	(1.098)	(7.338)	(1.220)	(2.646)	(1.223)	(6.654)	(1.119)	(8.949)	(1.227)	(7.050)
Observable Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
District Fixed Effects		Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes
Observations	335	335	331	331	335	335	335	335	333	333
Panel B: School-Level Analysis										
Officer Served	1.149**	1.035	1.308**	0.932	1.258**	1.050	1.073+	1.050	1.139**	0.990
	(0.0401)	(0.0507)	(0.0549)	(0.0650)	(0.0471)	(0.0415)	(0.0443)	(0.0535)	(0.0491)	(0.0588)
Constant	0.171**	1.752**	0.0602**	1.297	0.736**	8.362**	0.101**	4.188**	0.243**	3.725**
	(0.0115)	(0.370)	(0.00514)	(0.285)	(0.0547)	(3.131)	(0.00862)	(1.409)	(0.0196)	(1.597)
Observable Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
District Fixed Effects	Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes	
School Fixed Effects		Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes
Observations	4,162	3,764	4,162	3,428	3,161	2,508	3,161	2,502	3,158	2,484

Note. Standard errors in parentheses. SE are clustered in district-level analysis. Sample sizes vary due to some districts with zero disciplinary incidents for outcome which is undefined when log transformed and some schools with all zero outcomes over time. Results in Panel A are from OLS regression with log transformed outcome, and results in Panel B are incidence rate ratios from conditional fixed effect negative binomial regressions. ** p<0.01, * p<0.05, + p<0.1

Results – School Discipline

- District-level
  - Not consistently statistically significant
- School-level
  - With school FE, no significant relationship with discipline

Results - Summary

- Evidence that law enforcement in Florida schools increase reporting of behavioral incidents to law enforcement and to increased arrests
- Suggestive evidence of more behavioral incidents
- Little evidence of impacts on school discipline

Limitations

1. Aggregate data
2. Not all districts were willing to share school-level data on the placement of school police
3. May be other variables not accounted for by controls and fixed-effects
4. Limited set of outcomes

Implications

1. School districts should reconsider whether law enforcement should be present in schools, keeping in mind that state law limits alternatives.
2. The state requirement to have armed personnel in schools should be revisited with an eye toward returning control to local school districts and schools to determine how best to ensure a safe learning environment.
3. School districts and law enforcement agencies should adopt clear policies that restrict the ability to arrest to a limited set of serious infractions and prohibit arrest of young students.
4. If present, law enforcement in schools should be trained in age-appropriate conflict resolution, in ways to reduce implicit bias and disproportionate minority contact, and in alternatives to the use of force or arrest.

Thanks!

www.fchriscurran.com

www.ufedpolicy.org

@fchriscurran

chriscurran@coe.ufl.edu