



"There are kids here whose parents I was the security guard for," Lt. Perry Amos says.

"There are parents who say, 'Please watch over my kid.' " JOHN TERHUNE/JOURNAL & COURIER

OFFICERS

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Current measures

Police officers began protecting LSC parking lots in the mid-'80s. In 1995, they moved into buildings. Today, there are typically six police officers on duty, primarily at Jefferson, Tecumseh and Sunnyside. The officer at Sunnyside spends part of his day checking on the corporation's alternative schools.

Aside from officers, LSC policies help secure every building. Doors remain locked at all times. Visitors must be buzzed into the building by an office worker.

Every school has multiple security cameras. Jefferson has 250.

If there is a threat of gun violence, LSC policy is to instantly go into lockdown. Hallways are cleared, classroom doors are shut, windows are covered and students are moved into one section of the room. There are no color codes or cryptic warning signs; lockdown is the first and only option.

"We want people to know exactly what's happening, even if they have never been in the school before," said school resource officer Mike McIver, who leads the in-school officers. "If you hear 'lockdown,' you're not going to just stand there wondering what's going on."

Officer Perry Amos has been working at Jef-

erson High School since 1992. During those 21 years, he has removed guns from students four times.

One of those incidents occurred when a student brought a loaded handgun to school with the intention of killing his ex-girlfriend. The girl reported to the in-school officers that the student was trying to get her alone. The officers apprehended the armed student before any violence occurred.

"There is no doubt in my mind," McIver said. "If it wasn't for having police officers in the school, it would have been a homicide-suicide situation you would have seen on CNN."

Officers' role

Despite the raging national debate on school safety following high-profile shootings, the current in-school officers spend most of their time on basic student punishment issues.

It's not to say that drug use, fights and serious offenses don't occur in LSC schools. In-school officers wear bulletproof vests and are armed with a gun, a Taser and pepper spray.

But lost cellphones, arguments between friends, dress code violations and skipped classes are much more commonplace offenses that officers like Williamson deal with.

She spends most of her day walking the halls, checking bathrooms and talking with students.

"I try to interact with the students as much as possible," Williamson

said. "It's good for them to know we're here to make them feel safe or talk about anything going on at home."

In many ways, in-school officers have taken it upon themselves to deal with smaller punishment and safety issues so administrators don't have to. They process disciplinary referrals, talk on the phone with concerned parents and have conferences with disobedient students.

"With the changes in how they have to process teacher evaluations, this year (the administration) was dumped with so much stuff to do. It cut their time to work with the kids in half," said McIver.

As a full-time resource officer, McIver is trained and certified to counsel students and educate employees on safety issues.

"We don't respond with a heavy hand," McIver said. "We're dealing with teenagers. We deal with circumstances as they come and try to lead the students in the right direction."

If LSC decides to place officers at elementary schools, those officers would certainly deal with fewer disciplinary matters. But that doesn't mean they wouldn't be useful, Earhart Elementary Principal Greg Louk said.

"A police officer would be another adult in the building to look out for the kids. Another role model," Louk said. "If the corporation thinks having uniformed officers in the building will help, then I welcome it."