

# SHOULD POLICE BE ALLOWED IN SCHOOLS?

*THIS ACTIVITY SHOULD TAKE ABOUT 90 MINUTES. IF LEARNERS ARE ABLE TO REVIEW MEDIA PRIOR TO THE LESSON, ACTIVITY TIME SHOULD BE 45 TO 60 MINUTES.*

## INVESTIGATE

Read, watch, and listen to the three media resources on the Thinkalong module. Learners can use the Investigate graphic organizer to summarize each piece of media and record new information. Below are summaries of the three pieces of media curated in the Thinkalong module.

### STUDENT ACTIVISTS HELP DIVERT MILLIONS IN FUNDING AWAY FROM LAW ENFORCEMENT IN SCHOOLS

PBS | June 10, 2021 | Video  
5:54 minutes

This PBS Newshour segment discusses how student activists in Los Angeles played a part in defunding police in schools.

- A student activist group Students Deserve helped to get the Los Angeles Unified School District to divert \$25 million (or 1/3 of what the district was spending on school police) away from school police funding. The cuts meant that more than 100 officers were laid off and the use of pepper spray was banned in schools.
- Before the funds were diverted, there were police stationed in every middle and high school in the district. Now, they will no longer be present.
- Following this decision, the school board voted to use the divested money specifically to support Black students as a part of their ongoing effort to combat systemic racism in schools. They chose to hire more counselors and staff to provide greater socioemotional support for Black students.

### WHY THERE'S A PUSH TO GET POLICE OUT OF SCHOOLS

NPR | June 23, 2020 | Audio  
4:03 minutes

This article looks at the reasons why many activists advocate for the removal of police from schools, particularly in relation to the Black Lives Matter Movement.

- Data show that schools that have police officers are more likely to refer students to law enforcement, including for non-serious violent behaviors. According to a study by the Education Week Research Center, Black students are more likely to be arrested than other students while at school in 43 states and Washington, D.C.
- Two incidents captured on body cameras in the fall of 2019 showed police violence against Black students. In Florida, an officer put a 6-year-old Black girl in handcuffs as she sobbed. In New Mexico, a police officer shoved an 11-year-old Black girl against a wall.
- While those who are in favor of having police in schools often believe that this will make schools safer, a 2018 Washington Post analysis of nearly 200 incidents of gun violence on campus found that school resource officers were only able to successfully intervene in two of those shootings.

*Using public media — video, audio and digital reports — about newsworthy topics, these classroom-based exercises help learners to think critically about media messages, develop informed opinions, and practice how to take a stand.*

## DO POLICE OFFICERS IN SCHOOLS REALLY MAKE THEM SAFER?

NPR | March 8, 2018 | Audio | [Transcript](#)

4:49 minutes

Following the Parkland shooting in 2018, this segment reflects on the role of police officers and School Resource Officers (SROs) using one Chicago school as an example to understand how police in schools affect students.

- Placing police (or SROs) in schools is one of the fastest-growing areas of law enforcement.
- The National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO) estimates there are between 14,000 and 20,000 officers in about 30% of schools in the U.S. Those numbers began to grow after the Columbine shooting in 1999.
- Marc Schindler, the head of the Justice Policy Institute, says that the data really shows that more police in schools is “a failed approach in devoting a very significant amount of resources but not getting the outcome of school safety that we're all looking for.”

### KEY WORDS

Look out for these important keywords in the news stories. Discuss the definitions with your learners and see how they affect the understanding of the story.

- Restorative justice
- School-to-prison pipeline
- Defund
- Divert

### CONTEMPLATE

Learners will use media literacy questions to critically engage with news by thinking about its purpose, searching for bias and discussing missing perspectives. They will answer the 5 Key Questions of Media Literacy created by the Center for Media Literacy, which are:

1. Who created this message?
2. What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?
3. How might different people understand this message differently than me?
4. What values, lifestyles and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?
5. Why is this message being sent?

A graphic organizer is included in this guide and the Thinkalong website to help learners answer these five questions about each piece of media.

### DEBATE

Use the debate tool on the module webpage to help form evidence-based responses to the debate question.

Thinkalong is designed to help learners engage with real issues that are relevant to their lives. [Structured discussions](#) allow learners to practice their critical thinking skills through evidence-based debate with their peers. Discussions are designed to take about 30 minutes. Educators are encouraged to modify aspects that work best for their learners.

To encourage civil discourse, please review the [Code of Conduct](#) with your learners.

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