

Wake County Sheriff Calls On School Board To Create Its Own Police Force

By Administrator
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Wake County Sheriff Donnie Harrison has requested that the Wake County School System create its own police force.

The request calls in the wake of a highly publicized incident at Roseville High School in which a school resource officer is seen wrestling with a female student. Today, the sheriff's department provides the school district approximately 60 accredited law enforcement officers for security in the district's high and middle schools.

Sheriff Harrison made the request via a letter which follows:

Following recent news coverage about the student fight incident at Rolesville High School, I wanted to share with you my thoughts about moving forward with a centralized approach to safety and security at our Wake County Public Schools.

Four years ago, I co-chaired a committee to review public safety issues facing our public school system. At that time, I made a series of recommendations including the formation of a police agency within the public school system. I believe we really do need to begin to move in that direction, sooner rather than later.

Our schools are continuing to see tremendous growth. This year the Wake County Public School system has more than 185,000 students, teachers, administrators and staff. It is the fifth largest public school system in the nation yet, the public safety apparatus for our schools is disjointed with multiple agency involvement and oversight.

This patchwork of a public safety system in our schools is set up for failure. Currently, we have 11 chiefs of police and one sheriff with oversight and direction of law enforcement efforts

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in our public schools. Each agency has different protocols and training standards that often may be in conflict with the goals and objectives set by the school board and superintendent.

It is imperative that we address this problem before it becomes a system failure that impacts a student, a teacher or a citizen of Wake County.

As elected leaders, we need to work together to provide a safe and secure environment for learning in our schools. I understand the county's concern about upfront costs associated with establishing a new police agency, but I believe in the long-run it will be a good investment for our schools and our citizens.

A public safety department under the direction and authority of the Wake County School System will provide a centralized command system. It will ensure consistency in operational needs such as off-time facility security and a command center that can appropriately monitor every single school facility in the county. The agency would provide its officers a specialized training program geared for the specific needs of our schools – building positive relationships with our students, educators and law enforcement officers.

Finally, it will provide a clear-cut channel of communication between school administrators, educators and the law enforcement officers, which is critical for an effective enforcement program in our schools.

I want you to know that I will work with you, the county manager, the superintendent and the school board to begin movement in this direction.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss this further, please feel free to call.