

**Seminole County Sheriff's Office and School District recommend new safety initiatives -  
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SEMINOLE CO. (2/26/13) - Sheriff Donald Eslinger and School Superintendent Walt Griffin today announced new recommendations for increasing the involvement of deputy sheriffs in Seminole County schools. The proposal includes the hiring of additional school resource deputies for elementary schools, and the implementation of a new student program, Focus on Safety.

"Our strategy involves prevention and education," said Sheriff Eslinger. "This is not just about placing armed guards in schools; it's about assisting parents, continuing to integrate deputies into the community, and equipping our students with the right safety skills to make informed decisions in life."

"A positive relationship between students and law enforcement will benefit our students, parents and our community," said Superintendent Griffin. "This program will empower our students to make educated decisions and to better understand the role of law enforcement in Seminole County."

The proposal calls for 10 new, full-time, school resource deputies who would be assigned to 22 public elementary schools. The additional positions would ensure every school in the county has an assigned deputy. The deputies will serve as standing law enforcement liaisons to the school, and will deliver the Focus on Safety program to students. The 10-week, interactive program for 5th graders includes topics such as: substance use and abuse, gang and violence awareness, bullying, and internet safety. Currently, the Seminole County Sheriff's Office has 12 school resource deputies assigned to three high schools, six middle schools, and three alternative education sites.

The proposal will be discussed at tonight's school board meeting, with a potential Board action in March. Funding for the initiative (\$700,000) would be split between the school district and the Sheriff's Office.

Sheriff Eslinger will request funds from the County Commission for the fiscal year beginning Oct. 1. In the interim, the Sheriff's Office plans to use reserve funds to begin hiring the school resource deputies, and is piloting the Focus on Safety program at Carillon Elementary School this school year.