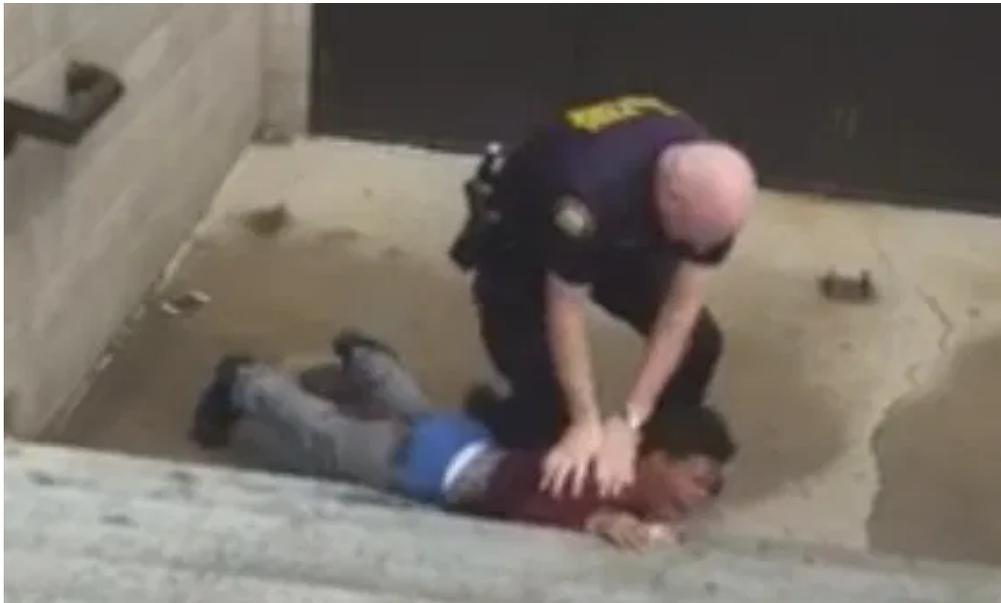


NEWS > EDUCATION

After rough student arrest, will St. Paul schools kick police out?

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A former St. Paul Central High School student is taken into custody for trespassing at the school Wednesday, May 25, 2016. (Video courtesy of Nelson Moroukian)

Video of a teenager's arrest Wednesday at Central High School is reopening the debate over police officers' role in schools just as St. Paul Public Schools is working on a new contract with the city police department.



School board member Steve Marchese wrote on Facebook that he's "angry and appalled" at the 16-year-old former student's rough treatment.

"Whatever the reason, he did not deserve what is depicted in this video," Marchese wrote.

"To have this kind of action perpetuated by a white school resource officer who is supposed to be protecting our students and staff is unacceptable and raises questions about the continued wisdom of SROs (school resource officers) in our schools."

[Watch the arrest video \(warning: it contains explicit language\)](#)



St. Paul school board member Steve Marchese

St. Paul Public Schools is paying up to \$854,000 this school year to have nine police officers stationed at district high schools. The city's cost share for the program is \$100,000.

The SRO contract expires next month and the parties are working on a new contract, which would require school board approval.

The school district released a statement Thursday asserting that it values the partnership with the police department and that SROs "play an important role in keeping buildings safe and secure."

In a statement, the St. Paul Police Department defended in general terms the use of force, which they said is necessary in about one out of every 200 calls for service.



“Sometimes taking people into custody isn’t pretty; it can be concerning for those who don’t understand the way officers are trained to do their jobs. Our officers try to avoid physical contact with people, and more often than not, they are able to do so,” it read in part.

WHAT HAPPENED

Police also described the circumstances of the arrest in greater detail Thursday ([read their statement here](#)), saying the teen had been in the building for about an hour, refusing to leave before school resource officer Bill Kraus was called to help.

Kraus found the teen listening to music on his phone in the gym where a gymnastics class was in session. A friend, Olivia Nelson, said Thursday that the class was the teen’s favorite before he transferred out of Central last week.

When Kraus motioned for the student to come with him, police said, the student didn’t move. So Kraus took the youth’s phone away and led him to a more private place “in an effort to not create more of a disturbance in front of class,” police said.

The teen used profanity as they walked to the exit door, and when Kraus began to make an arrest, the teen pushed the officer, police said. Kraus then shot two bursts of a chemical spray and struck the teen twice in the leg to take him to the ground, where he forced his arms behind his back to handcuff him.

Cellphone video recorded by another student shows the last two minutes of the arrest with the teen crying out for help.

The teen made an appearance in a closed juvenile courtroom Thursday, where he is charged with obstructing the legal process, a gross misdemeanor, and misdemeanor trespassing on school property.

ANGRY FRIEND

Speaking during a small demonstration outside Central after school Thursday, Nelson said the officer’s use of force “pissed me off.” Her friend is about 5 feet 2 and 115 pounds, she said, and the officer “did not need that much force and he did not need Mace to control” him.

Nelson said the teen had visited the school to talk to a teacher about a class trip planned for Friday. He planned to join the class despite having transferred.



The police department said the use of force isn't necessary if people "simply do what officers ask." Still, they said they review every incident where force is used to determine whether it was justified.

School resource officers in St. Paul and elsewhere have been under particular scrutiny this school year.

After a South Carolina police officer was recorded flipping a female student out of her desk, outgoing St. Paul school board chair Mary Doran asked the district's student advisory group to study the topic of SROs in school.

The group — now known as the Student Engagement and Advancement Board — offered [numerous suggestions](#) to de-emphasize the officers' law enforcement role, such as ignoring minor drug crimes. Based on student surveys, the group found black and American Indian students were far less likely than their peers to view the resource officer as someone they can turn to for help.

The students said they were interested in exploring whether the SRO program should exist at all but that school district staff censored their questions. They did note during their presentation that a United Nations panel recommended police be removed from schools.

In a tweet directed at the city police department Wednesday, the group posted a link to the arrest video on Wednesday and asked, "Is this why there's an SRO in my school?"

[.@sppdPIO](#) Is this why there's an SRO at my school? <https://t.co/VsnoKp1IQZ> — Student Advancement (@SPPSStudentAdva) [May 25, 2016](#)

Students from Central and other high schools took to social media Wednesday to criticize the treatment of the teen and of other African-American students in the district, and Black Lives Matter St. Paul held a demonstration after school Thursday.

Timothy McGee, who is black and a Central sophomore, said he's seen Kraus use "unnecessary roughness" to break up three different fights at the school. He said the school needs an officer to keep students and staff safe, but he wants someone who will use greater restraint.



For McGee, the incident spoke to larger concerns about the treatment of students of color. He said white students are allowed to move about the school more freely than he can and are not punished as severely for offenses such as fighting.

Tags: [Crime](#), [St. Paul](#), [St. Paul Public Schools](#)



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Josh has written about St. Paul public schools and higher education for the Pioneer Press since 2014, 11 years after the paper first published his byline as a University of Minnesota intern. He did a two-year stint on city government and crime in Austin, Minn., and spent seven years in Sioux Falls, S.D. covering crime and education, as well as editing. Josh was good at baseball once. Now he plays tennis against old men.

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