

East Price Hill 5th graders get a taste of police work

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Students from Roberts Academy get to spend the afternoon at the Cincinnati Police Academy learning about police K-9 units, SWAT teams, and forensics. Shae Combs/The Enquirer



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Officers Alex Hasse and Charles Knapp stood next an armored SWAT vehicle Friday with a heavy steel battering ram and bulletproof shield.

They were smiling, not because they had just captured a criminal, but because there were a dozen fifth graders from Roberts Academy staring at them and their equipment.

Knapp gave each child a turn holding the battering ram.

"That's the key to city," Hasse explained. "It can open any door."

He told the children during a recent SWAT situation, Knapp was manning the ram and he was waiting behind him.

"I heard a sound like the Incredible Hulk," Hasse said. "Then the door exploded. I think the door actually apologized for being there."

The children laughed, wide-eyed.

Two classes of Roberts Academy students came to Cincinnati Police Academy Friday as part of the Adopt A Class program. Tiffaney Hardy, police communications director, said the department adopts more than 10 classes throughout the city each year.

"The kids are very excited to experience this," said Ron Wendth, English language arts teacher. "One of the things we've been trying to do is let them see what police officers are like when they're out of the news, notice that they're real people."

In addition to learning about the SWAT team, the students were also introduced to K-9 units, forensics and the firearms training simulator.

Some students jumped when the air-powered training pistol was fired in the darkened room where police recruits interact with a floor-to-ceiling video screen, but the recruits answers to their questions were even more startling.

"Dang!" several kids exclaimed when they were told the recruits had to pass a 200-question state exam to become officers. They were also shocked to learn the full grown men standing in front of them still had to take spelling tests.

The children were also taught about deescalation and compliance as the recruits ran through a simulation.

Specialist Scotty Johnson has taken Abdoulaye Koundoul under his wing. Abdoulaye is interested in joining the SWAT team if he doesn't become an NFL player. Johnson said he hopes kids like Abdoulaye can see that anything is possible if they apply themselves.

"To see this guy's face light up and these kids having a great time, this is really a good thing and good time for us also," Johnson said. "There's no goal that too high for them. We all came from the same backgrounds, and they're able to do all the great things we've been able to accomplish."