

BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Sheila Dixon
Mayor, City of Baltimore

Neil E. Duke, Esq.
Chair, Baltimore City Board of
School Commissioners

Andrés A. Alonso, Ed.D.
Chief Executive Officer

December 7, 2009

The Honorable Stephanie Rawlings-Blake
Members of the Baltimore City Council
Room 400 City Hall,
100. N. Holiday Street
Baltimore MD 21202
City Council Bill No.: City Council Bill No. 08-0068R

Dear Council President Rawlings-Blake:

City Schools works collaboratively with outside agencies including The Mayor's Office on Criminal Justice (MOCJ), the Baltimore Police Department (BPD), Department of Social Services, Department of Juvenile Services, and the Baltimore City State's Attorney office. Key initiatives include gang prevention, Daily Watch Center, support for students in foster care, support for students that are DJS involved, and a diversion program for youth operated in conjunction with the Baltimore City State's Attorney office. Each initiative is discussed below.

Gang Prevention

Ensuring that students feel safe on their way to and from school and while in school is a top priority. Gang activity threatens the well-being of City students and reducing gang activity and related violence is critical to improve and maintain school safety. The Mayor's Office on Criminal Justice (MOCJ), the Baltimore Police Department (BPD) and Baltimore City Public Schools (City Schools) are committed to working together to prevent youth from becoming gang-involved and to intervene and provide alternatives to youth who are already gang-involved.

Overall, safety in City schools is improving. Suspensions and serious offenses are down this year and students and parents report feeling safer at school than in years past. Schools have been successful in minimizing gang related incidents. There were sixty-one (61) incidents in 2007/08, forty-one (41) in 2008/09 and two incidents this year (as of 10/12/09). However, there is much work to be done.

Training on gang activity has occurred at every school in City Schools. School police have made presentations to school staff and faculty on gang prevention and principals will undergo training on gang awareness, prevention and intervention in the near future. Schools are charged with communicating the message to staff, students and parents that schools are neutral ground and



Comments

that gang, drug and weapon activities will not be tolerated. School staff participates in professional development that helps establish and improve the good discipline and management practices that ultimately help fight gang activity. Schools are encouraged to establish mechanisms for student conflict mediation and obtain input from students on youth-related concerns and gang prevention strategies.

In partnership with law enforcement, high-risk schools receive special attention in the form of safety checks by police and deployments that help ensure safe travel to and from school. The School Police Dare program and the BPD G.R.E.A.T. program both serve several City schools. Four schools in Central and West Baltimore receive additional gang prevention and intervention support through a grant with the Baltimore City Housing Department. City students who are identified as gang members are referred to the BPD's Get Out The Game program.

Student Transit

Partnerships and information sharing between City Schools, BPD, the Department of Juvenile Services and other agencies continue to grow. These partnerships are vital to make our schools safer. Beginning last school year, a School Dismissal Detail was established daily during the school week and coordinated at the BPD's Watch Center. The detail is staffed by members of the Maryland Transit Administration Police Department, BPD, and Baltimore City School Police Department.

DSS case workers

Beginning for the 2009-2010 school year DSS has assigned 16 social workers to City Schools. These workers serve as a liaison between schools, DSS, and the community to support students that may need additional support. The addition of the workers assists the school is quickly providing support to students and parents in diverse areas including attendance, counseling services, and wrap-around supports.

DJS workers in 14 schools

Fourteen schools have DJS workers assigned to them. The workers have a roster of DJS involved youth that they meet with and monitor their attendance, academics, and behavior in school. The DJS worker also serves as a mentor and additional support for these students.

Baltimore City State's Attorney Office

City Schools and the Baltimore City State's Attorney office have collaborated to fund Partnership For Learning. The programs work to reduce future crimes by first-time juvenile offenders with reading difficulties by re-engaging them in learning, educational and vocational opportunities. The joint collaboration allows the programs to expand the number of students they can serve.

Mayor's Office of Employment Development

City Schools works with the Mayor's Office of Employment Development to provide students with real world work experiences to prepare them for the world of work. They are an operator of one of City Schools' Innovation High Schools. They run the Futures Program—a dropout prevention program, and they coordinate the Youth Works summer employment program.

City Schools continues to work very closely with other agencies to ensure the safety of students and staff in schools and in the community. We plan to continue to improve these partnerships on behalf of our students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Andrés A. Alonso".

Andrés A. Alonso, Ed.D.
Chief Executive Officer