



## City School Administrators Discuss Violence



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Teacher Attack Recorded by Cell Phone

The vicious attack on a teacher in Baltimore City back in April highlighted the issue of school violence. Art teacher Jolita Berry was beaten by a female student at Reginald F. Lewis High School, and the incident was recorded on a cell phone camera.

City school administrators say the incident has given them renewed focus, and they met with parents Tuesday night at Digital Harbor High School to talk about their plans to keep it from happening again.

'What's most important for us at this time is the focus on our efforts this summer so that when we open school all of our teachers, staff and administrators are ready,' said Jonathan Brice, executive director of student support services for the Baltimore City School System.

City school administrators have analyzed suspension and drop-out rates, along with the number of students who've been held back in school. By ninth grade, 49% of the students in the Baltimore City School System are over-age, some by two or three years. Administrators say these students have lower attendance rates, and higher suspension rates than their peers.

Now, the system is preparing up to 24 competitive, 'transformation schools' over the next four years. Alternative education programs, such as morning or evening classes for students who work, are also being expanded.

The system is also overhauling the students' code of conduct, which students will have to study this fall. 'Lessons focused on students understanding the code of conduct, understanding ways to peacefully resolve conflict,' Brice said.

Experts also agree that parents have to be involved for any of the proposed solutions to succeed. 'We're paying taxes our child is going to a school, so you should want to participate, you should want to be there to make certain that the best is available for your child,' said Roland Mills, whose son is a 10th grader at Mergenthaler Vocational-Technical High School.

There will be two more meetings about the city's plans to address school violence this week. The next meeting is this Thursday night at 6:00 PM, at Mergenthaler HS. Another meeting is set for Saturday at 9:00 AM, at Frederick Douglas High School.

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