Students: Violence out of control; School, community meetings could be answer for District

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ABSTRACT (ABSTRACT)

Audenried, Overbrook and Simon Gratz high schools have all been locations of gruesome acts of violence done by the city's teens.

Monday, 10 to 12 females at Audenried in South Philadelphia were in a serious altercation involving a weapon that has yet to have been recovered. One student was cut in the face and five students had a variety of other injuries.

Tuesday, a fight broke out at Gratz in North Philadelphia where 22 students and two adults were arrested. Additionally, there was a fight at Overbrook in West Philadelphia on Jan. 31, with four students being arrested.

FULL TEXT

Responding to the recent altercations popping up in the city's high schools, the Philadelphia School District says it's keeping its promise of having safe schools in the city.

Audenried, Overbrook and Simon Gratz high schools have all been locations of gruesome acts of violence done by the city's teens.

But, School District Spokesman Cameron Kline says communication between parents, schools and school administration has increased.

"And that's what's going to keep the schools safe," said Kline.

Kline emphasized that parent and community meetings were scheduled after school yesterday at the three high schools with additional assemblies held for the students throughout the school day.

"We need to reach out to the students. We need to know the issues among students," said Chief Safety Executive Dexter Green. "We need to let students know they have different outlets."

Principals, assistant principals and school security officers have been reassigned at both Audenried and Overbrook high schools to other schools within the district.

Monday, 10 to 12 females at Audenried in South Philadelphia were in a serious altercation involving a weapon that has yet to have been recovered. One student was cut in the face and five students had a variety of other injuries.

Luckily, the girl who was struck in the face is OK.

"The girl who was cut in the face was not involved in the altercation," Green said.

Since the incident, Green stated, three arrests have been made. The charges included reckless endangerment, having a weapon on school property, aggravated assault, simple assault and possession of an instrument in a crime. It is still unclear how the weapon entered the school, Green said, because all of the girls involved in the fight swiped in and went through the metal detector.

"Initially the students were suspended, but the suspensions were dropped," schools CEO Paul Vallas said. "One 15-year-old will be tried as an adult. At least four of them will be expelled."

Tuesday, a fight broke out at Gratz in North Philadelphia where 22 students and two adults were arrested. Additionally, there was a fight at Overbrook in West Philadelphia on Jan. 31, with four students being arrested.

The Philadelphia Police Department has been very instrumental in working with the school district. Green said. Moreover, he said, they would like behavioral health professionals and the community to get involved with the students too.

"We have increased our security by five additional officers who will remain there indefinitely," Green said. "Everybody has to do their part. That's what the plan is."

Parents or students with concerns can call the bully hotline at 215-299-SAFE.

Photograph (Audenried High School)

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