



January 4, 2010

Dear Parent,

You may have read or heard reports on TV and radio recently of student-initiated assaults on teachers at Fairless Elementary School.

Because of the highly emotional nature of those reports, I thought it necessary to respond quickly and directly with the facts.

REPORT: It was reported that "at least 10 teachers have been attacked" and that North Braddock police have been called 30 times to Fairless Elementary since September.

FACT: It is true that police have been called to Fairless Elementary approximately 30 times since school began in September. District policy is to report ALL incidents to the police regardless of severity. This is a change from previous administrations. There were a variety of calls; all were not in response to student behavior incidents.

It is an exaggeration bordering on misrepresentation to say that 10 teachers have been "attacked." We have written reports of 10 incidents where students with behavioral disabilities acted inappropriately toward other students and sometimes tried to harm themselves, but teachers were not the intended targets of aggressive behavior.

All of these students had their Individual Education Plans reviewed and revised. Consequences were determined by the team and the therapeutic support these students needed was provided. Several of these students are no longer in the school.

Through the course of the school year, three Fairless teachers and a support staffer reported personal injuries due to student behavior. All individuals were checked and cleared medically to return to work.

REPORT: A kindergarten student attempted to strangle his teacher with a rope.

FACT: NOT TRUE.

A kindergarten student did place his hands on his teacher's neck and she was sent to the hospital for an examination. The teacher returned to the classroom after being medically cleared. The student is no longer at Fairless.

REPORT: An eleven year-old student head-butted a pregnant teacher.

FACT: NOT TRUE.

A fourth grade student did push a pregnant teacher in the stomach while the teacher was disciplining him. As a precautionary measure, the teacher was sent to the hospital for follow – up examination. She returned to her classroom the next day.

This student was immediately suspended and is now in the disciplinary process as prescribed by the Student Code of Conduct.

REPORT: The District is not doing enough to stop the violence.

FACT: The District earned praise last year from the District Attorney and all borough and township police chiefs for its swift, decisive steps to restore order and purpose to every school and classroom.

Actions included:

- Immediate reporting of all incidents to local police;
- Zero tolerance for violence directed at students or teachers, including immediate suspensions and/or expulsions;
- Re-training of building security;
- Installation of new video security system.
- Highly qualified teaching staffs that are trained to handle disruptive students.

REPORT: The Fairless Elementary building principal ordered a reporter off school property.

FACT: All media requests are to be directed to the District Communications Office or myself. Our procedure is to cooperate and respond in a responsible time period with all media requests. We work with the media to communicate the facts.

REPORT: The superintendent did not respond to numerous media requests for comment.

FACT: I was in California visiting family as part of a pre-scheduled holiday vacation. It is unclear how the reporter attempted to reach me. However, through my cell phone I was available for comment.

It is the policy of the Woodland Hills School District that our schools are open and our staff is available to anyone who wishes to visit and contact us.


We are transparent about any and all activities that occur on school property, including ones that involve local police.

We are bound by federal, state and local laws to protect the privacy of individual students.

We stand behind our previous statements that our schools are safe and secure.

We invite anyone in the community, including the media, to visit any building they wish – unannounced – at any time. All that we ask is that you stop by the building office and sign in with the principal.

Sincerely,



Walter M. Calinger, Ph.D.
Superintendent