

Public Comments for School Board Meetings

#776

I would like to provide: * Virtual Public Comments through Zoom

Select the meeting date: * March 7, 2024, 6:30 p.m.

My public comments are related to: * General Public Comments

Topic * Safety Security Recommendations

Full Name * Ricardo Roberts

What is your relationship to ACPS? * Parent/Guardian of an ACPS Student

Enter your comments here OR upload below:

School administrators and school safety professionals are seeing a noticeable increase in fighting, especially at the middle and high school levels, in the past two school years. Some fights are exceptionally large in number of students, highly aggressive, and at times involve persons from outside of the school who are not students.

We put together some thoughts on prevention and responding, recognizing that these are general observations and my school security experience. First, each school will need to evaluate its unique contexts and needs. We hope these thoughts may be helpful in stimulating critical strategic thinking and internal conversations by school leaders, teachers, support staff, and school safety officials.

Preventing and preparing for student fights requires an “all in” approach and engage all staff in training and awareness about preventing and responding to student fights. Be sure all staff are trained in awareness and what to look for. This training includes custodians and food/nutrition staff. These people often are the first to see students in the morning and throughout the day.

Engage students to identify strategies for reducing and preventing fights. What do they see as the sources of conflicts that lead to fights? What do students believe can be done to de-escalate such conflicts? How do they believe school staff can best support such prevention efforts?

What do your school board policies and procedures state about whether staff must physically intervene? Some policies do not allow staff to physically intervene. If not allowed to physically intervene, what steps should be taken? Will police be called and who will call? Other steps?

Staff should be assigned to known “hotspots” in the building. These times include before school, during passing periods, at breakfast and lunch, and after school. School safety leaders must ensure staff members have been trained, their duty assignments are made in writing, and leaders check that staff is in place and on time.

Passing periods require staff to be in the hallways and visible. Staff must be trained to observe. Be on the lookout for any gathering that is out of the normal and be prepared to verbally intervene when responding to student fights.

Make sure everyone understands the importance of dispersing the crowd. Have you ever seen a school fight without a crowd? Without the crowd present, it is often easier to break up the fight.

Once a fight has started, the first step for staff is to verbally intervene. Those verbal commands must be simple and direct. Call the students by name (if you know either or any of the combatants by name). If names are not known then direct them to STOP!
