

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL**

**BENCHMARKING SCHOOL
SECURITY OF THE
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
PUBLIC SCHOOLS**



**AUSTIN A. ANDERSEN
Interim Inspector General**

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Office of the Inspector General

Inspector General



March 21, 2005

Dr. Clifford B. Janey
Superintendent
District of Columbia Public Schools
825 North Capitol Street, N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20001

Dear Dr. Janey:

Enclosed is the final report summarizing the results of the Office of the Inspector General's (OIG) Benchmarking School Security of the District of Columbia Public Schools (OIG No. 03-2-14GA (d)).

Our report presents a comparison of the school security business practices of the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) with comparable school districts in other jurisdictions. We conducted this benchmarking study to identify school security measures that could prove useful for the DCPS system.

Although there were no recommendations contained in our draft report, we requested that DCPS provide any comments to the report by February 22, 2005, for inclusion in our final report. However, on March 14, 2005, DCPS informed us that the agency would not provide any comments.

If you have questions, please contact William J. DiVello, Assistant Inspector General for Audits, at (202) 727-2540.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Austin A. Andersen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Austin A. Andersen
Interim Inspector General

AAA/mf

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Final Report OIG No. 03-2-14GA (d)
March 21, 2005
Page 3 of 3

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**BENCHMARKING SCHOOL SECURITY OF THE
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
EXECUTIVE DIGEST	1
OVERVIEW	1
CONCLUSIONS.....	1
INTRODUCTION	3
BACKGROUND	3
OBJECTIVE, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY	3
BENCHMARKING SCHOOL SECURITY OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS	5
GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT DCPS	5
Security Budgets	7
SECURITY DIVISION ORGANIZATION.....	10
The Corporate Approach of BCPS	11
SECURITY GUARD FORCE.....	12
Contracted Versus In-House Security Guards	12
Security Cost.....	13
Use of Armed Security Guards.....	15
PHYSICAL SECURITY (DOORS, CAMERAS, METAL DETECTORS).....	16
Incident Reporting Systems	17
DCPS Incident Tracking System	17
STUDENT ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS	19
SPECIAL SERVICES (INTERVENTION AND PREVENTION PROGRAMS)	20
APS Programs.....	20
Philadelphia’s Anti-Bullying Campaign.....	21
DCPS Student Intervention Programs	22
Attendance and Truancy Intervention.....	22
LEVERAGING OF RESOURCES.....	23
Use of Grant Funding to Promote Social Services for the School Community.....	23
Cooperative Agreements.....	24

**BENCHMARKING SCHOOL SECURITY OF THE
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

**TABLE OF CONTENTS
(CONTINUED)**

	<u>Page</u>
BENCHMARKING SCHOOL SECURITY OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS (CONTINUED)	
NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND ACT	25
PPS Approach to NCLBA	26
SECURITY PERSONNEL TRAINING AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION.....	26
Baltimore City Public Schools.....	27
Intensive Program for Top-Notch Security Officer Candidates	27

EXECUTIVE DIGEST

OVERVIEW

This report is the seventh in a series of reports by the District of Columbia Office of the Inspector General (OIG) that evaluate the District of Columbia Public Schools' (DCPS) operation of the school security program. Our objective was to benchmark DCPS's school security program by comparing DCPS's program with similar programs in comparable school jurisdictions for school years (SY) 2002-2003 and 2003-2004. The information and analyses in this report are for comparison purposes only and identify security practices that may be useful to the DCPS, District leaders, and other stakeholders. The report is not intended to pass judgment on school security in other jurisdictions visited.

During our benchmarking efforts, we reviewed the schools' security policies and procedures, observed security guard forces and physical security in schools, and evaluated the incident reporting processes as well as the use of student accountability systems, special student services, and intervention and prevention programs. We also obtained information on the training and background investigations of security guard personnel, and the implementation of provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLBA) in six school districts, including DCPS. The six school jurisdictions were:

- Atlanta, Georgia Public Schools (APS)
- Baltimore City, Maryland Public Schools (BCPS)
- Montgomery County, Maryland Public Schools (MCPS)
- Philadelphia, Pennsylvania Public Schools (PPS)
- St. Louis, Missouri Public Schools (SLPS)
- Washington, D.C. Public Schools (DCPS)

We appreciate the cooperation and courtesies extended to our staff by the school districts visited.

CONCLUSIONS

Overall, the benchmarking review confirmed the following observations:

- Four out of six security programs use in-house security personnel. The exceptions, DCPS and APS, use contracted security personnel to provide security for its schools.
- Compared to the school jurisdictions that use in-house school security services, DCPS and APS have the highest per-student expenditure for security and ranks second and fifth respectively in total FY 2004 budget for school security.

EXECUTIVE DIGEST

- Three of the six school jurisdictions benchmarked do not use metal detectors or x-ray scanners in the schools. DCPS uses both metal detectors and x-ray scanners throughout their public schools.
- The method of tracking attendance varies by school jurisdiction. Three of the six school jurisdictions utilize an automated student accountability system to account for students on a daily basis. DCPS has begun preliminary development of an automated student accountability system.
- Implementation of the NCLBA initiatives that identify persistently dangerous schools vary by the approach taken for each school jurisdiction, with Philadelphia taking an aggressive approach to implementation. DCPS has been slow in responding to the NCLBA.
- All of the school jurisdictions developed student intervention and prevention programs. One exemplary program in particular was the Philadelphia Public School System which had a grants office that aggressively sought additional monies to secure additional resources for the schools.
- Three out of six security programs have direct coordination with their local police departments. DCPS also has coordination between its school security program and the Metropolitan Police Department, which provides additional assistance and personnel to area schools.
- Three out of six school jurisdictions have developed a comprehensive security incident reporting system. DCPS has taken steps to develop a comprehensive incident reporting system and improvements are forthcoming.

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

Pursuant to Title 5, District of Columbia Municipal Regulations (DCMR) § 501.3, the Superintendent of the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) has broad authority to take any actions necessary to carry out the duties and responsibilities of the office. Title 5 also established the Division of School Security to help ensure a safe, ethical learning environment for students and staff. DCPS Division of School Security is responsible for preventing, detecting, and investigating criminal and other illegal activity on DCPS property, at DCPS events, by or against DCPS students and employees. As such, the Division of School Security plays an integral role in the maintenance of order and discipline within DCPS.

The Division of School Security is headed by the Executive Director of School Security who reports directly to the Superintendent of Schools. The Division of School Security conducts criminal and non-criminal investigations pertaining to internal and external violations against DCPS and its employees, contractors, and students, and consults and maintains a liaison with the OIG and the Federal Bureau of Investigation relative to complaints or allegations of fraud, waste, and abuse within DCPS.

In our effort to assist the DCPS efforts to improve school security, we observed the security practices in DCPS, and compared DCPS security practices with school security practices at five comparable school jurisdictions. Our intent is to provide the DCPS with a unique opportunity to compare and evaluate its school security program with other school jurisdictions, and possibly use the information to craft future management decisions regarding school security.

In addition to DCPS, the five jurisdictions are identified throughout this report as APS (Atlanta Public Schools); BCPS (Baltimore City Public Schools); MCPS (Montgomery County Public Schools); PPS (Philadelphia Public Schools); and SLPS (St. Louis Public Schools).

OBJECTIVE, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

The announced audit objectives of the series of OIG audits pertaining to DCPS school security were to: (1) evaluate the adequacy of the internal controls over security; (2) determine whether laws, policies, regulation, and directives are correctly interpreted and applied in the administration of the security function; and (3) evaluate the DCPS's performance with regard to economy and efficiency. After discussions with DCPS officials, we added an objective to compare and evaluate DCPS's school security program with comparable school jurisdictions. This report also focuses on the results of our observation of best practices relating to school security operations within the DCPS and other similar municipal public school districts.

INTRODUCTION

To accomplish our objectives, we interviewed school officials and security officers regarding management and operational controls established over the school security programs and visited selected schools and facilities at each municipal public school district included in our review. We obtained varying amounts of data and records from each of the municipal school jurisdictions. We also used selected data for presentation in this report. The audit was performed in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards and included such tests as we considered necessary under the circumstances.

BENCHMARKING SCHOOL SECURITY IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT DCPS

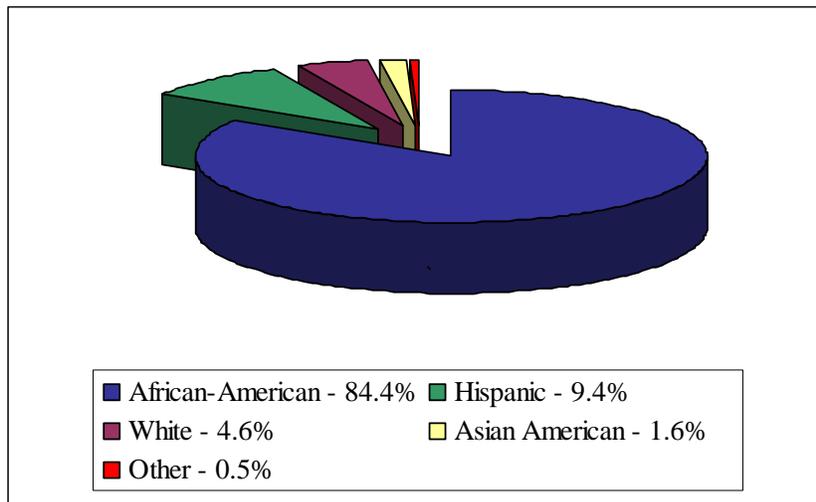
At the beginning of the 2003/2004 school year, DCPS's student population was 65,099 within 167 schools. Table 1 below provides a breakdown of the number of public schools within DCPS.

TABLE 1. DCPS SCHOOL STRUCTURE

School Level	No. of Schools
Elementary Schools	101
Middle Schools	11
Junior High Schools	9
Senior High Schools	20
Educational Centers	6
Special Schools	20
Total	167

DCPS's student population consists of an ethnically diverse group comprised of more than 112 different languages that represent 138 different nationalities. When we compared the diversity of DCPS's student population to diversity patterns in three other jurisdictions, we observed a similar student body composition. Tables 2 through 5 below illustrate the percentages of the total student enrollment by ethnicity for these four jurisdictions.

TABLE 2. DCPS STUDENT ENROLLMENT BY ETHNICITY



BENCHMARKING SCHOOL SECURITY IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

TABLE 3. APS STUDENT ENROLLMENT BY ETHNICITY

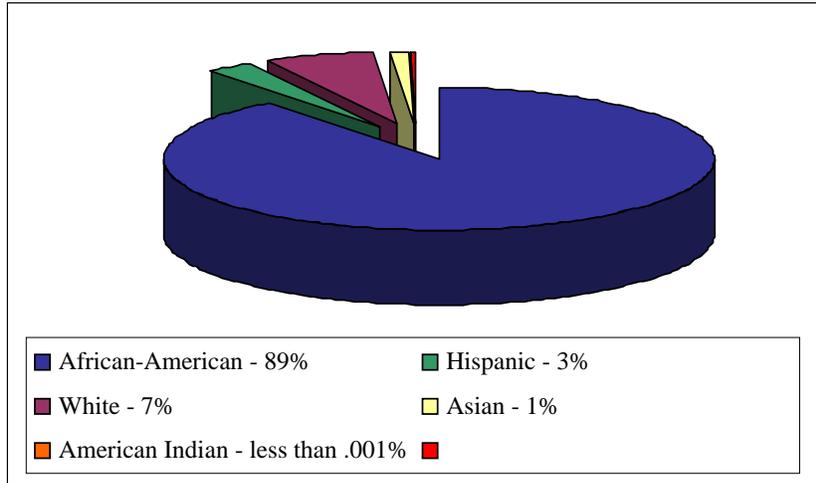
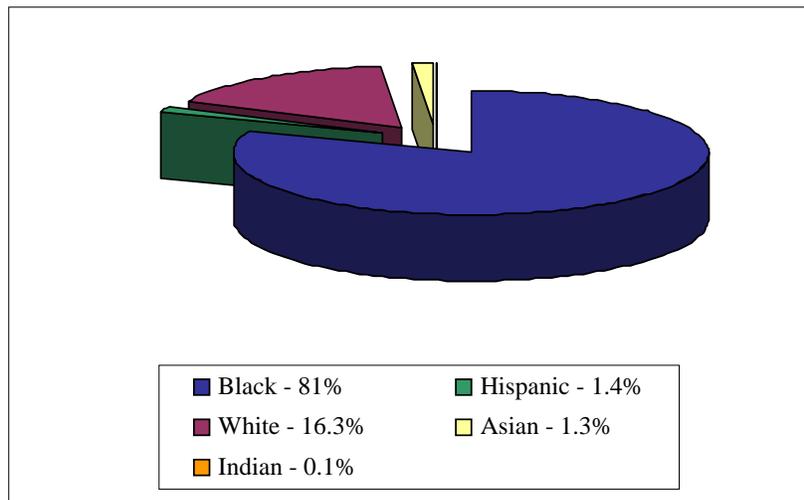
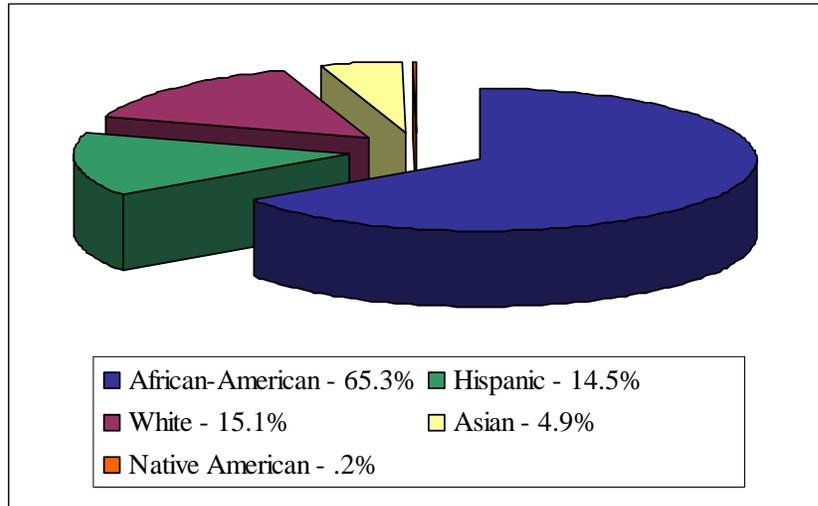


TABLE 4. SLPS STUDENT ENROLLMENT BY ETHNICITY



BENCHMARKING SCHOOL SECURITY IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

TABLE 5. PPS STUDENT ENROLLMENT BY ETHNICITY



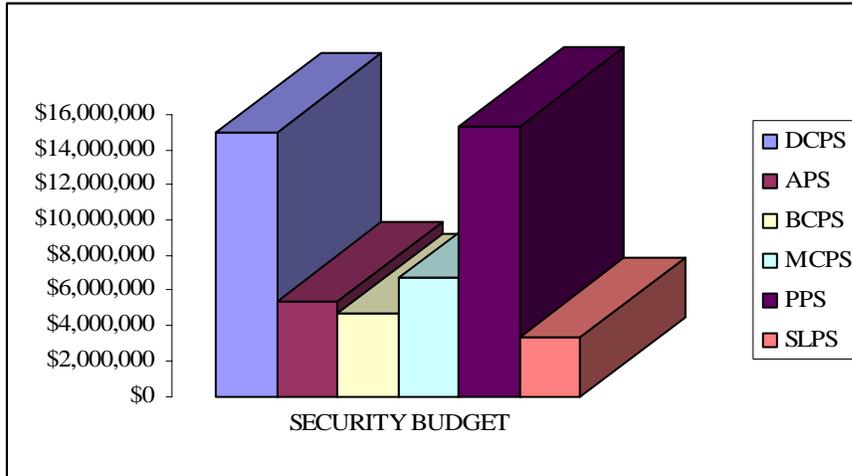
The categories cited in the above tables were provided by each municipal school jurisdiction, which account for the slight difference in the description of ethnicities. Similar to the DCPS, the APS, SLPS, and PPS schools have high populations of African-American students and a varied mix of ethnicities for the balance of the school population.

Security Budgets

The DCPS FY 2004 budget for security was approximately \$15 million, which represents an expenditure of approximately \$230 per student. Compared to the other five school jurisdictions, DCPS has the highest per-student expenditure for security and ranks second in total FY 2004 budgeted dollars for school security. Tables 6 and 7 depict the budget level and expenditures per student for each jurisdiction.

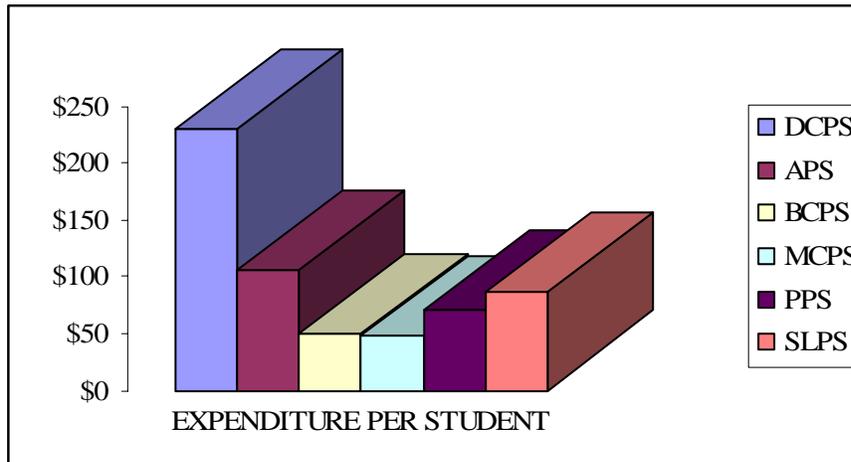
BENCHMARKING SCHOOL SECURITY IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

TABLE 6. SECURITY BUDGETS



The PPS spends \$15,308,300 on school security, slightly more than DCPS. The remaining four school jurisdictions spend considerably less on school security than both DCPS and PPS.

TABLE 7. EXPENDITURE PER STUDENT



However, DCPS ranks fourth in both total student population and number of school facilities, whereas PPS ranks first in both categories as shown in Tables 8 and 9 below.

BENCHMARKING SCHOOL SECURITY IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

TABLE 8. STUDENT POPULATION

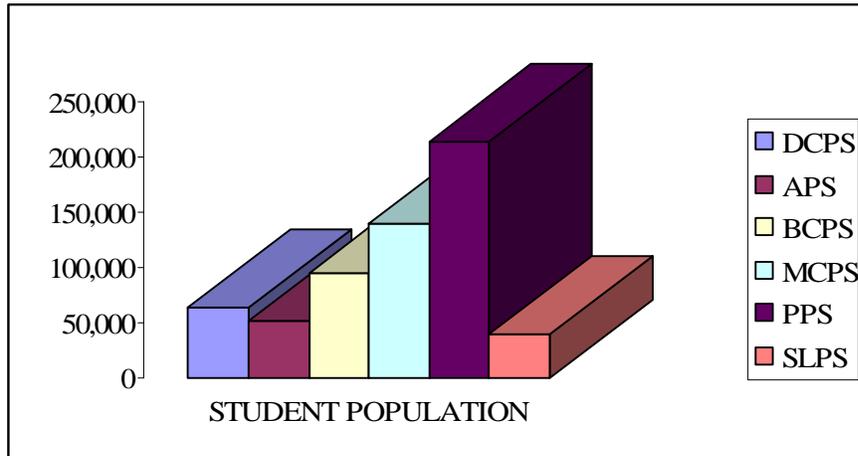
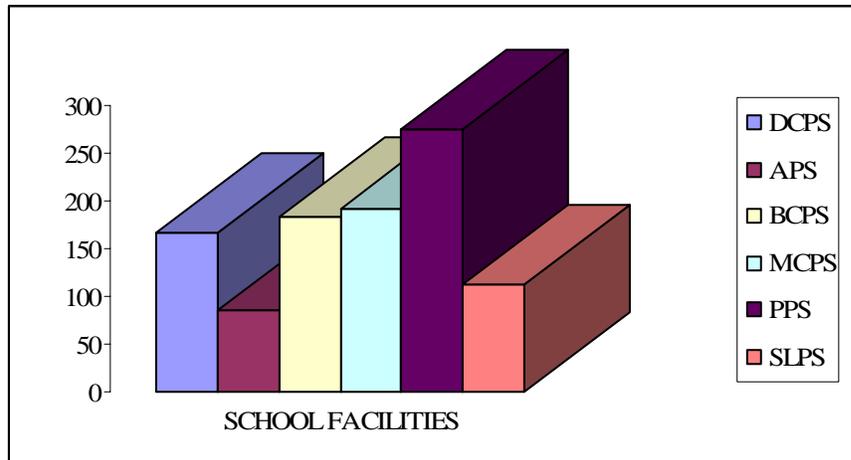


TABLE 9. NUMBER OF SCHOOL FACILITIES



BENCHMARKING SCHOOL SECURITY IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Table 10 below provides a comparison of the total student enrollment, total number of facilities, FY 2004 security budget, and approximate expenditure per student for school security.

TABLE 10. COMPARISON OF VARIOUS SCHOOL STATISTICS

	DCPS	APS	BCPS	MCPS	PPS	SLPS
STUDENT POPULATION	65,099	51,000	94,049	139,203	214,350	39,397
SCHOOL FACILITIES	167	85	184	192	276	113
SECURITY BUDGET	\$15,000,000	\$5,388,584	\$4,737,011	\$6,700,000	\$15,308,300	\$3,400,000
EXPENDITURE PER STUDENT	\$230	\$106	\$50	\$48	\$71	\$86

SECURITY DIVISION ORGANIZATION

The DCPS Division of School Security is comprised of 13 DCPS employees: 9 security investigators, 2 administrative persons, and 2 information systems staff persons. This includes the chief investigator, school investigators, technology investigator, tuition investigator, background investigator, administrative assistant, and the secretary. In addition to the 13 DCPS employees, a Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) Liaison Officer is assigned to the DCPS Division of School Security to coordinate and facilitate the Division of School Security activities with MPD. This liaison with MPD permits the use of additional police resources when needed.

One contrast noted in comparing the organizational leadership of the DCPS security division with other jurisdictions was that all of the head security executives in other jurisdictions were former police chiefs or officers. For example, APS's Director of Security was the former Chief of Police of Fulton County, Georgia (GA), and Baltimore City Public School's Chief of School Police was a former Chief of Police for public housing. The APS Security Director informed us that the experience gained from years as a Chief of Police has helped develop a strong understanding of the schools safety and security climate, and has also complemented their leadership of the school security department. Another example of former police experience was PPS's Safety Executive, who had over 30 years of law enforcement experience and was also a former Assistant Commissioner of the city's police department.

The PPS official further stated that having former police personnel involved in school security increased the level of criminal investigative experience that benefited his entire

BENCHMARKING SCHOOL SECURITY IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

school security organization. Another contrast we noted was the “private industry” management structure and practices of several school jurisdictions’ security department’s operational functions. School jurisdictions in St. Louis, Baltimore, and Philadelphia have all adopted a “corporate approach” in managing their school security operations.

The Corporate Approach of BCPS¹

According to BCPS school officials, the “corporate approach” has afforded each BCPS school security chief with more autonomy and accountability for the progress of their respective departments and has allowed the schools to focus only on the areas and issues that directly affect their strategic operations. The BCPS school officials further stated that their management staff has adopted three traits that are common in Fortune 500 companies and that are also applicable to a law enforcement agency looking to improve the way it is perceived by the community it serves. These traits include:

1. Performance-based measurement-This concept is used to measure what matters most, what organizations receive in productive output, and in what areas they fail to measure to the performance standard that could negatively affect the quality of learning.
2. Quality Improvements-There are various methods of operating a police department that reduces crime and enhances security without violating civil liberties or losing community satisfaction. Such quality improvements include community policing. Community policing offers ways to control crime while defusing the potential for adversarial relationships with the community and while developing police-community relations through education of the community in crime control strategies.
3. Customer Service-Similar to corporate heads, police chiefs need to understand that a primary management focus should be on satisfying the customer, our citizens. Community policing recognizes the customers of the police are not just the callers—and not just the general populace, for that matter. They are also the organized groups with particular interests. As such, community policing bridges that gap and builds on relationships with these groups to effectively fight crime.

Accordingly, by strategically thinking like a Fortune 500 company, a school security force can show two bottom-line benefits: reduced cost of policing and increased public participation, both of which will yield greater customer satisfaction. This approach tends

¹ The corporate approach detailed below is set forth in the Baltimore City Public School System’s Comprehensive Safe Schools Strategy.

BENCHMARKING SCHOOL SECURITY IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

to improve communication resulting in a rapport among school officials, security personnel, and the community and results in quick turnaround time for resolving school related issues.

Overall, the “corporate approach” used by the BCPS school security organization is worthy of additional study and consideration for use within the DCPS.

SECURITY GUARD FORCE

One glaring difference noted during our benchmarking review was the managerial approach to acquiring security guard services. We found that four of the six school jurisdictions employed an in-house force of security guards. In addition to the lower cost associated with an in-house force, we noted several other advantages a school receives by the very nature of having an in-house school security force. Apart from the increased professionalism and consistency of services, in-house security services tend to have an overall positive effect on the school security climate within the schools.

Since 1996, the DCPS has contracted with a security service firm to provide staff and security services for DCPS sites (schools and other school administrative facilities). The security service contractor staff consists of approximately 400² security-related personnel. In conjunction with the DCPS Division of School Security, the contractor is responsible for providing: licensed management and support personnel experienced in protection services; all uniforms, materials, equipment, transportation, administrative support; and training to support school security functions. Certain security services were to be provided 24 hours a day, 52 weeks a year. Other security functions include developing and maintaining a professional security organization capable of intervening and suppressing activity that threatens the safety of DCPS students and staff, and conducting security surveys of schools and administrative buildings.

Contracted Versus In-House Security Guards

DCPS and APS were the only two jurisdictions that contracted for school security services. All of the other jurisdictions we visited had in-house security guard services. We noted a greater level of professionalism, diligence, and a strengthened security posture at the schools using in-house security services. School officials in the SLPS stated that the expenses and cost savings associated with an in-house security staff versus a contracted security service should be considered in totality. While in-house security staff and officers are highly compensated in some cases, the overall cost savings a school might realize in subsequent years are considerably higher when compared to contracted

² This figure includes the contractor’s school-based officers as well as their administrative personnel.

BENCHMARKING SCHOOL SECURITY IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

services. School officials in the SLPS attributed overall cost savings to the ability to control in-house costs and security requirements as resources evolve and change. Another comparison noted was from the security guard force in the BCPS, which consists of in-house school police officers and school resource specialists. BCPS school officials stated that an in-house security guard force provides for a more professional working environment and the security guard force tends to be much more manageable. Further, the BCPS benefits more from its own in-house comprehensive security training and does not have to rely on training from an outside source who might not understand the rules and regulations unique to their school jurisdiction.

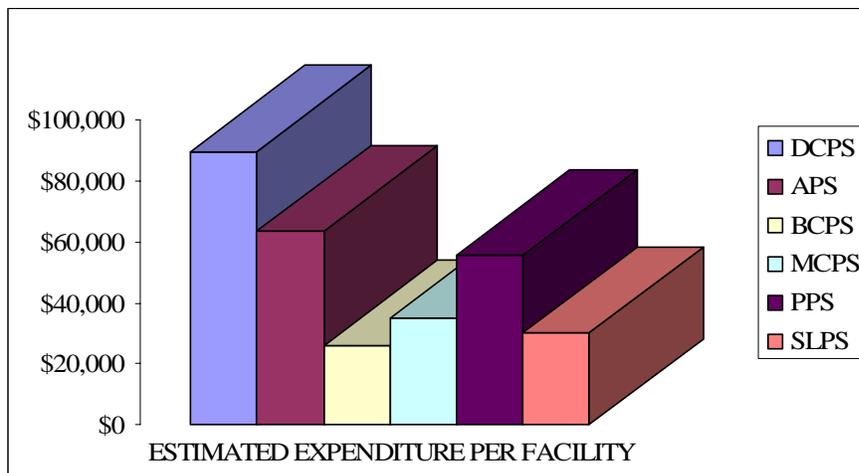
Security Cost

When compared to the other school jurisdictions visited, the DCPS and APS have the highest average security expenditure per officer (respectively \$37,500 and \$46,857) and the highest average security cost per facility (respectively \$89,820 and \$63,395), while APS had the lowest cost per officer (\$27,493), and BCPS had the lowest cost per facility (\$25,745). Further, DCPS had the highest ratio of guards to students (1:163), while BCPS had the lowest ratio of guards to students (1:697).

When deciding whether to have an in-house security force or a contracted security force, SLPS school officials believe that school jurisdictions should consider the cost savings, as well as the quality and effectiveness of security services.

Tables 11 and 12 below show the comparative breakdown of the security cost in all 6 jurisdictions.

TABLE 11. SECURITY EXPENDITURE PER FACILITY



BENCHMARKING SCHOOL SECURITY IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

TABLE 12. SECURITY EXPENDITURE PER OFFICER

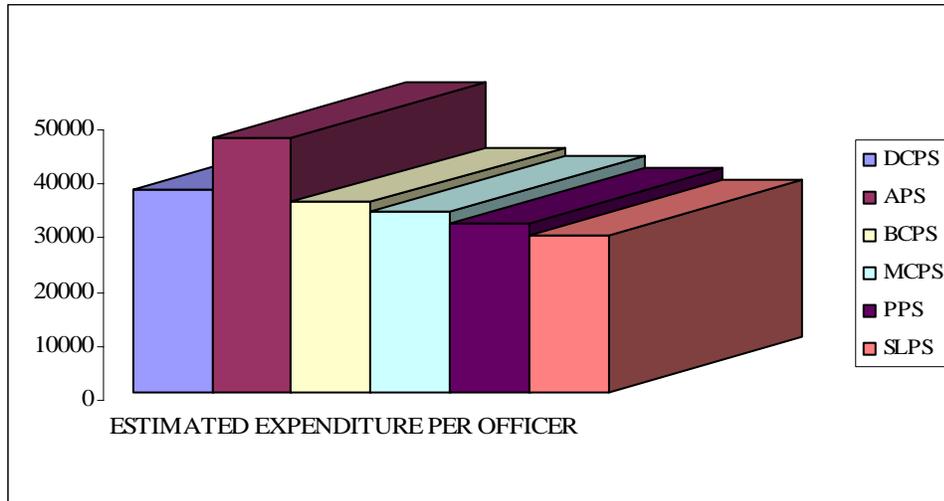


Table 13 provides a comparison of the DCPS security operation with the other five jurisdictions.

**BENCHMARKING SCHOOL SECURITY IN THE
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

TABLE 13. SCHOOL SECURITY COST AND OTHER CHARACTERISTICS

	DCPS	APS	BCPS	MCPS	PPS	SLPS
IN-HOUSE/ CONTRACTED	CONTRACT ED	CONTRACT ED¹	IN- HOUSE/ SCHOOL POLICE OFFICERS	IN- HOUSE/ SPECIAL POLICE OFFICERS	IN- HOUSE/ SPECIAL POLICE OFFICERS	IN- HOUSE/ SCHOOL POLICE OFFICERS
NUMBER OF OFFICERS	400	115 ²	135	201	492	117
NUMBER OF FACILITIES	167	85	184	192	276	113
RATIO OF GUARDS TO STUDENTS	1:163	1:433	1:697	1:693	1:436	1:337
POLICIES & PROCEDURES	YES	YES ³	YES	YES	5	YES
ESTIMATED EXPENDITURE PER FACILITY	\$89,820	\$63,395	\$25,745	\$34,896	\$55,465	\$30,089
ESTIMATED EXPENDITURE PER OFFICER	\$37,500	\$46,857	\$35,089	\$33,333	\$31,114	\$29,060
ARMED SECURITY OFFICERS	NO	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES
FORMAL TRAINING	YES	4	YES	5	YES	YES
BACKGROU ND CHECKS	YES	5	YES	5	YES	YES
ARREST AUTHORITY	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES

¹APS currently has a contractual agreement with the Atlanta Police Department for law enforcement services and a contractual agreement with a security service contractor.

²This figure includes 14 APS school detectives.

³The Atlanta Police Department has policies and procedures for their city police officers.

⁴The Atlanta Police Department provides formal training for its school officers; however, there is no formal training for the APS security service contractor.

⁵The jurisdiction did not provide information concerning this matter.

Use of Armed Security Guards

With the exception of DCPS, PPS, and MCPS, all of the other school jurisdictions' school security officers were armed. Only three jurisdictions (Atlanta, Baltimore, and Philadelphia) had school security officers who were sworn school police officers. School officials from the BCPS stated that having police officers based in schools and working with pupils, parents, and teachers fosters a greater understanding of social responsibility and the role each person has in making our communities safe. According to DCPS, none of the contracted school-based officers deployed are "sworn" officers, however, the officers are commissioned under the provisions and general laws of the District of Columbia. According to the security service contract, armed officers must be qualified as

BENCHMARKING SCHOOL SECURITY IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Special Police Officers (SPOs) in the District of Columbia. SPOs have the same powers as a law enforcement officer and are empowered to make arrests within the premises to which his or her jurisdiction extends. According to the DCPS security service project manager, with the exception of the Facility Security Officers (FSO), Senior School Resource Officers (SSRO), School Security Investigators (SSI), and officers on the auxiliary security staff, none of the school-based officers are authorized to carry a firearm.

PHYSICAL SECURITY (DOORS, CAMERAS, METAL DETECTORS)

School facilities in all jurisdictions visited have problems with insufficient door security. Uniformly, school officials informed us that securing entry doors are a challenge. However, some school jurisdictions have begun to take a proactive approach to control and secure the doors of their schools. For example, APS and SLPS have implemented high security delayed egress doors in some of their schools to control the traffic to and from their schools. APS, as part of a modernization program, has begun standardizing its door lock systems, eliminating most exterior trim and installing exit devices that can be locked down from the administration building downtown. In addition, Atlanta officials stated that by the year 2007/2008, children in the APS will not attend class in any school building older than 8 years. The DCPS, with the exception of two pilot schools, does not have door lock systems to sufficiently secure school doors.

All of the school jurisdictions, with the exception of BCPS, use surveillance cameras. Generally, school officials stated that surveillance cameras are most useful in providing the ability to respond to an incident of violence within the schools. All have placed cameras in locations where they can monitor activity as it takes place. Most of the cameras in use include features like pan, tilt, and zoom and can be seen from the outdoor or indoor locations. One of the most commonly used surveillance devices we noted was the use of multiplexers. School jurisdictions such as APS, SLPS, and DCPS all used multiplexers that offered same day recording, archived storage, and playback functionality. A typical multiplexer utilized in the above schools is a "quad" multiplexer that combines four video signals into one single signal allowing an individual to monitor four sections of the school at once. School officials have stated that one of the most important uses of the surveillance cameras is the ability to respond quickly to an incident of violence within the schools.

**BENCHMARKING SCHOOL SECURITY IN THE
 DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

Table 14 illustrates the physical security controls at each of the six jurisdictions.

TABLE 14. ASPECTS OF PHYSICAL SECURITY

	DCPS	APS	BCPS	MCPS	PPS	SLPS
MULTIPLEXERS	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	YES
VIDEO SURVEILLANCE	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES
DOOR HARDWARE	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO	YES
METAL DECTECTORS	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	YES

Incident Reporting Systems

We found that all of the school jurisdictions had some form of an incident reporting system. Some systems were elaborate, intensive automated systems while others were basic data-entry databases. Worthy of attention was the automated system developed by the APS. APS officials informed us they had developed a system that tracked an incident from the initiation phase to resolution. According to APS school officials, any data pertaining to an incident are entered into their fully automated School Administrative Student Information (SASI) system and continuously tracked to provide parents, students, and the authorities with any necessary information.

APS school officials stated that once an incident occurs, the information is entered into the system by school officials. Once in the system, the incident is tracked until the issue is resolved. In addition, APS school officials had also informed us that the SASI is decentralized down to the local school levels. This produces quick results and allows for resolution in a prompt and timely manner. Further, APS school officials informed us that the SASI system generates both suspension reports and incident reports which are then submitted to the appropriate federal agencies for NCLBA mandated state reporting purposes.

DCPS Incident Tracking System

At present, the DCPS utilizes a Microsoft ACCESS database to track all school security incidents that occur in and around the school facility. The database is designed as a repository to record only the initial incident data and was not designed to track incidents from the date reported to final disposition. When an incident occurs in and around the school grounds, the School Resource Officer (SRO), Principal, Assistant Principal, or other administrative official immediately calls the Division of School Security.

BENCHMARKING SCHOOL SECURITY IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The Principal also notifies the appropriate Assistant Superintendent. The on-site SRO notifies the MPD and the Fire and Emergency Medical Services Department as appropriate. The SRO calls the security contractor, who maintains the system, to obtain an incident report number and to provide preliminary incident information so that the information can be entered into the incident reporting database. Once this is completed, a database entry is generated from a Serious Incident Report (SIR)³ that is logged in a book at the respective school site and filed.

Information regarding the incident is also forwarded to the DCPS Chief Investigator and the security contractor's Chief Investigator. Later, the DCPS Interim Executive Director reviews the report and determines whether the incident will be investigated by the DCPS Chief Investigator or the contractor. Depending on the severity of the incident, especially where criminal activity is involved, MPD usually assumes full responsibility for a criminal investigation. According to the DCPS Interim Executive Director, at times this creates a coordination problem between the Security Division and MPD in handling school incidents. Once a decision is made to conduct an investigation and after the DCPS Investigative Unit or the security contractor completes an investigation, a Report of Investigation (ROI) is prepared.

The ROI contains a detailed explanation of what occurred and who was involved in a particular incident. The completed ROI is forwarded to the DCPS Chief Investigator for review and is submitted to the DCPS Office of the General Counsel (OGC) for legal sufficiency. At the completion of the OGC review, the OGC submits its legal sufficiency determination to the DCPS Division of School Security. If the OGC does not agree that the issue can be substantiated, the ROI is closed. However, if the OGC confirms that the case is substantiated, the ROI and legal decision are forwarded to the Office of the Superintendent for review.

Corrective actions surrounding the incident are normally the responsibility of the school principal. Presently, DCPS does not have a comprehensive incident reporting system to centrally record and track incidents from initiation to final disposition, which leaves many incidents unresolved for inordinate periods of time. In comparing the DCPS incident reporting system to reporting systems in other jurisdictions, we believe that DCPS should explore the possibility of developing a more comprehensive incident reporting system.

³ A SIR is a standardized document on which information about an incident is recorded prior to entry into the incident-reporting database.

**BENCHMARKING SCHOOL SECURITY IN THE
 DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

Table 15 compares some basic features of the DCPS incident reporting system with other jurisdictions.

TABLE 15. INCIDENT REPORTING SYSTEMS

	DCPS	APS	BCPS	MCPS	PPS	SLPS
INCIDENT REPORTING PROCESS	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
AUTOMATED SYSTEM	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	NO
POLICE COORDINATION	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	NO INFORMATION PROVIDED
PERSISTENTLY DANGEROUS SCHOOLS	NO	YES	YES	NO INFORMATION PROVIDED	YES	NO INFORMATION PROVIDED

STUDENT ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

We observed that two of six school jurisdictions had a student accountability system. DCPS, in its efforts to improve student accountability, is presently seeking other alternatives to control and account for the student population present for any given school day. According to school officials, DCPS has developed plans to implement a computerized student accountability system. Presently, DCPS has spent approximately \$4.5 million in developing a computerized student information system that will be used to manage student enrollment, course enrollments, class schedules, attendance, disciplinary actions, special programs, grades, standardized assessments, and health information. However, we were informed that DCPS’s prolonged budget problems and the lack of available funds have significantly delayed their system development process. We found that PPS and APS both have implemented fully functional student accountability systems that have proved useful in reducing absences and tardiness and have improved class attendance.

PPS student attendance is maintained by a commercial off-the-shelf software package. As a part of the system’s capability, every student is required to report to school with an identification card so that the system can scan it into its database. Each student’s attendance data are shown on a monitor for school security officials to verify that student’s information. If a student is late and/or has an unresolved infraction, a verbal signal will alert the school security official. In Philadelphia, students who forget to bring their identification badges to school are fined \$1 for temporary badges, and if left unpaid, the fines continue to accrue until the students’ graduation. No student can graduate without paying his or her fines. School officials informed us that the teachers also use the system to determine whether students are present, tardy, and/or absent. This feature

BENCHMARKING SCHOOL SECURITY IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

is used as a check and balance system in the event a student's attendance record is challenged by the student or parental guardian.

PPS computerized student attendance system is deployed throughout all high schools. According to school officials, the system is not used at the elementary or middle school levels. Overall, the system has proven to be an effective tool accounting for students at the high school level.

SPECIAL SERVICES (INTERVENTION AND PREVENTION PROGRAMS)

Our review of each school jurisdiction's special services intervention and prevention programs revealed similar programs aimed at providing psychological and social support to the students and/or student's families. We observed that all of the services offered were done so by a collaborative effort amongst the school system administration and school security department. We also noted that several of the schools offered similar social, crime, and family intervention services. One exemplary program in particular was the Philadelphia Public School System which had a grants office that aggressively sought grant funds in order to secure additional resources for the schools.

APS Programs⁴

In the APS, we noted that a diverse and vast amount of social services were offered to school students. At a glance, the APS system offers a wide variety of social services that provide comprehensive, collaborative, and coordinated services to students, staff, parents and communities to ensure that all efforts focus on student success and the goals central to their strategic plans. APS special services include the following:

- Program for Exceptional Children
- Attendance and Truancy Intervention
- Counseling Services
- Family Involvement Center
- Nursing Services
- Psychological Services
- Social Worker Services
- Student Placement and Student Records
- Student Support Team
- Student Disciplinary Tribunals

⁴ The Atlanta Public Schools student programs and services detailed below are set forth on the web pages for their school system.

BENCHMARKING SCHOOL SECURITY IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The following briefly explains some of the social services offered by the Atlanta Public School System.

Family Involvement Center: Focuses on assisting parents in giving their children a quality education. It has been proven that students do better in school when their parents are meaningfully involved in their children's education. APS takes pride in the Family Involvement Center, a unique and innovative feature located in the Center for Learning and Leadership. The Center is designed to do the following:

- Assist parents in the development and practice of effective parenting skills.
- Foster a positive partnership between parents and teachers by fully involving families in the education of their children.
- Provide scheduled workshops that enhance parenting skills; improve reading readiness; provide test preparation; and make resources available to parents to improve their child's learning.

Social Workers: The school social worker facilitates the educational and individual potential of students by providing services that promote school success. The school social worker's primary role is that of a liaison/child advocate. The school social worker utilizes collaboration and consultation with students, parents, school administrators, faculty, and the community in the identification of family and student concerns to provide appropriate interventions and services that help children and families that are at risk for educational failure. School social workers respect the individual differences of children and families and work to develop relationships with students and families to facilitate the desired changes identified by the student, family, and school.

Counseling Services: The mission of school guidance and counseling is to provide quality programs for students in grades K-12 in three broad domains: self-knowledge information; educational and occupational information; and career planning information. APS instructs in these areas which are designed to help all students achieve success to become contributing members of society.

Philadelphia's Anti-Bullying Campaign

Philadelphia has identified bullying as a growing, problematic issue. The school district has initiated an anti-bully campaign in the elementary and middle schools. It has also instituted a 24-hour hotline to encourage victims or parents to report bullying and to stop questionable or criminal activities in and around schools. The Hotline is open to receiving information on harassment and bully incidents, theft, assaults, weapons, and other community concerns. Hotline personnel are trained to handle calls with sensitivity,

BENCHMARKING SCHOOL SECURITY IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

especially those incidents that need to be forwarded to the Philadelphia Police, Fire/Rescue, school police personnel, or other related agencies.

DCPS Student Intervention Programs

DCPS maintains two Student Intervention Service programs, namely Alternatives to Violence and Parent Centered Support Programs. Each one of the above services has multiple functions. Under the Alternatives to Violence Program, the objective is to provide alternatives to violence and serve as an intervention process designed to interdict violent behavior in class, schools, or on school property. Parent Centered Support Programs are designed to assist in family environments where students are being raised by single parents, without parents, or where both parents are at home and the student is experiencing severe difficulties at home that are causing adverse behavior at school.

While it is the principal's task to provide the best trained counselors to individual schools and develop cohesive and workable policies, DCPS social services must still be prepared to intervene and assist those schools that experience traumatic events such as the death of a fellow student by violent or non-violent means, severe accidents, or other calamities. Counselors often play a pivotal role by conducting home visits and referring students and parents to other District agencies and the courts, in order to seek more specialized help.

Attendance and Truancy Intervention⁵

The APS Truancy Intervention Program is designed to provide an effective deterrent to truancy, promote improved school attendance, and reduce instances of school-age youth involved in criminal activity. APS is committed to providing a balanced approach, which involves students, parents, educators, community volunteers, social agencies, and law enforcement representatives working together to ensure that youth will develop into responsible citizens. According to the Truancy Center Coordinator, the Atlanta City Transit Officers, the Ambassador Force,⁶ and the Georgia State Police all assist the school system in picking up truant students. The Truancy Intervention Center is designed to improve daily attendance and identify children not enrolled in school. According to APS school officials, Atlanta has approximately 8-10 thousand truant students each school year.

⁵ The Attendance and Truancy Intervention program detailed below are set forth on the web pages for the Atlanta Public School System.

⁶ The Ambassador Force of downtown Atlanta is a full-time, 60-person private hospitality and public safety force that interacts directly with all constituents of the downtown area, to include conventioners, tourists, special event attendees, downtown workers, and residents. They serve as the "eyes and ears" of the business community and downtown law enforcement agencies.

BENCHMARKING SCHOOL SECURITY IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Philadelphia also has an innovative approach to dealing with truancy. PPS's Office of Transition and Alternative Education oversees attendance and truancy within the school district. Proactive truancy enforcement has been initiated to reduce the high number of truants in Philadelphia. Daily truants can be as high as 15,000 to 20,000 students. The Philadelphia Police Department coordinates with the School Safety Office to aggressively pick up truants during school hours and detain them as necessary. One initiative involves large transit buses which follow police and school officials and collect truants detained through aggressive surveillance efforts. Truancy courts are held in designated schools in each region. These are actual courtrooms with a legal magistrate that circuits the school system.

In comparison, DCPS has services that handle truant students; however, the services provided are not as extensive. DCPS has an attendance intervention initiative whose purpose is to intervene with students who experience attendance difficulties. The initiative attempts to reverse or eliminate chronic tardiness, cutting class, truancy, and other behaviors associated with going to and staying in school.

LEVERAGING OF RESOURCES

Use of Grant Funding to Promote Social Services for the School Community⁷

Another exemplary group of social services offered to students is provided by the Baltimore School Police Force. The Baltimore School Police Force, along with the BCPS, has concentrated a great deal of effort to collect grant monies in order to secure additional resources for the schools. Grant funding is used for programs and initiatives aimed to network and collaborate with existing community resources. Some of the grant-funded programs include:

- Teen Court - a voluntary alternative to the juvenile system. Teen offenders charged with lesser crimes are placed in this program if they admit their involvement with the crime. A teen court trial is held and the teen offender is given sanctions that may include, but is not limited to, community service hours, apology letters, and/or anger management classes.

⁷ The social services detailed below are set forth in the Baltimore City Public School System's Comprehensive Safe Schools Strategy.

BENCHMARKING SCHOOL SECURITY IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

- Community Mediation Program (CMP) - offers mediation services to help people resolve conflicts. CMP also provides community education and conflict resolution training. CMP will mediate just about any dispute between two or more people. Some examples include: neighbor-to-neighbor disputes, family disputes between parent and teen, community association disputes, and disputes between friends.
- Smoke Workshop - a youth violence and crime intervention program, which sets up a series of interactions between a panel of ex-offenders, who have learned to change their previously violent behavior, and youth who are adjudicated or at-risk for incarceration. The project borrows its name from the street vernacular in which the word “smoke” means to shoot or kill someone. Smoke Workshops aim to “shoot at or kill” the negative behavior patterns and attitudes associated with youth violence and crime.

We observed a strong effort by the PPS to secure grant monies to fund social services at their local schools. Philadelphia has an Office of Grants Development and Support (OGDS) department whose sole function is to actively seek grants and encourage grant-writing efforts. OGDS provides PPS with additional assistance and research in the identification of new funding sources. Their philosophy is “Leave No Grant Behind.” OGDS collaborates with designated central offices, regional or school-based program administrators to spearhead writing of major federal, state, and local grant funding proposals for the Philadelphia school district. OGDS also assists in seeking grants for smaller scale programs. Presently, the office has obtained competitive grant funds totaling \$31 million during the 2003-2004 school year. According to school officials, the program offices historically oversaw the entitlements, but it has evolved over the years. Prior to adopting the CEO concept, Philadelphia’s grant funding was an educational program function, but it has been moved to the financial side.

DCPS has a Federal Grants Program Office charged with seeking federal grants, writing convincing applications for grant aid, and coordinating the flow of funds to the appropriate division. However, the Grants Office is not very active regarding physical security issues. The Local Education Agency (LEA) also seeks federal grants for DCPS, but there is no apparent coordination between the Grants Office and LEA. LEA personnel were unavailable during our field work and we, therefore, were unable to determine what efforts and corresponding successes DCPS experienced regarding the acquisition of grant funds.

Cooperative Agreements

The Philadelphia School System also has several cooperative agreements with community-based organizations to work within the school district. One such agreement

BENCHMARKING SCHOOL SECURITY IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

is the SMART program, a program held on Saturdays for kindergarten through 4th grade students. SMART is designed to provide these children with social development skills and has expanded its services from 9 to 22 facilities for the 2004 school year. According to school officials, the goal of the program is to provide life skills for students that have violated the code of conduct and are lacking behavioral discipline at homes. School officials also informed us that social workers are provided onsite for parents and alternative programs are provided for youth 17 to 21 years old.

Additionally, the Philadelphia Office of Specialized Services Special Education has established School Base Behavior Health (SBBH) programs with partnerships from the community. The major initiatives are targeted toward school safety problems and behavioral health issues. The SBBH also identifies children and schools that require specific health services. The SBBH has established partnerships with the University of California in Los Angeles and the University of Maryland. They have developed workshops for parents with health issues as well as the students, all to be established during the year.

NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND ACT

Through the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLBA), Congress amended the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the principal federal law affecting primary and secondary education. Under the NCLBA, Congress has made efforts to improve elementary and secondary education in the United States through accountability, emphasis on doing what works based on scientific research, expanded parental options and expanded local control and flexibility.⁸

The NCLBA provides that students attending schools needing improvement must be given the opportunity to transfer to a better-performing public school in the school district. After-school tutoring, academic summer camps, and other supplemental education services must be made available to students from low-income families who attend schools that have been in need of improvement for more than a year.

We noted during our review of school jurisdictions that few school security departments have begun to play some role in meeting the NCLB criteria set forth above. In comparing the school jurisdictions, BCPS, MPCS, PPS and APS were the school jurisdictions that have begun to take necessary steps to provide information to their respective state representatives in accordance with the NCLBA. According to APS school officials, the NCLBA permits each state to create its own standards for what a

⁸ Information in this section regarding NCLBA requirements is taken from DCPS's website, www/k12.dc.us/dcps/dcpsnclb.

BENCHMARKING SCHOOL SECURITY IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

child should know at all grade levels and to identify those schools that are low performing and/or persistently dangerous.

We found that in BCPS and APS, the schools have begun assessing current practices so that students will be better able to develop the necessary proficiencies. Further, students would be given priority to transfer to higher-performing schools that met adequate yearly progress.

PPS Approach to NCLBA

Philadelphia school officials conducted a school quality review to determine which schools fulfilled the requirements as mandated by the State Oversight Commission in accordance with the NCLBA. The review revealed that: (1) Philadelphia had 86 consistently low performing schools; and (2) 16 schools improved. As a result of the review, Philadelphia restructured 21 schools.

In addition, Philadelphia school officials informed us that the overall school climate in the PPS was not always conducive to learning (i.e. students roaming the hallways, disruptive behavior, etc.). As a result, an action plan was needed to improve certain PPS schools. School officials also stated that the survey and action plan was an outgrowth of the NCLBA. PPS officials indicated that when the NCLBA was implemented, there were 160 middle and high schools nationwide that were considered trouble schools. Of the 160 schools, 28 were from Pennsylvania, and of the 28, 27 were located in the City of Philadelphia. All of the 27 PPS schools were identified as persistently dangerous schools.

Some of the problems cited in these schools included the following: (a) a lack of a student accountability and control system; (b) special police officers not properly utilized; (c) staffing problems; and (d) under-reporting of serious incidents. School officials stated that their corrective action plan to resolve these and other noted problems included educating principals on the proper use of SPOs, clearing the hallways, implementing a student attendance and accountability system, and reporting all incidents that occur within the schools.

SECURITY PERSONNEL TRAINING AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Our comparison of training procedures and background investigations for school security personnel revealed that several of the school jurisdictions we visited differed in their approach to qualifying and verifying suitability of security personnel.

BENCHMARKING SCHOOL SECURITY IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Baltimore City Public Schools

As part of their training process, BCPS police recruits are hired as police officer-1s (PO-1s) until a slot in the policy academy becomes available. After successful completion of academy training, the PO-1 can then become a school police officer. The BCPS maintains a list of eligible candidates which is updated as necessary. As a result, screening, interviewing, and training candidates tend to be a laborious but thorough process, as evidenced by BCPS' intensive program for top-notch security officer candidates.

Intensive Program for Top-Notch Security Officer Candidates

This BCPS program requires that 100 candidates must be interviewed for every 10 slots filled. Candidates who interview successfully must pass a written test and achieve a 70 percent score. Further, according to the recruiting and training sergeant, oral interviews are conducted which must be passed with a 70 percent score. There is also a physical agility test that must be passed with a 70 percent score. These requirements filter out about one half of the successful interviewees.

Additionally, the Baltimore officials informed us that the background investigations conducted are thorough and intense. Background checks include former employers and friends, as well as character references. Similar to federal security checks, neighbors are interviewed, national security checks are conducted, and the candidate is fingerprinted. Eventually, successful academy graduates are trained and certified under the auspices of the Maryland Police Training Commission. School officials stated that on the job training provided to new hires alongside veteran school police officers stresses professionalism.

School police officers are encouraged to know the names of school students, as well as encouraged to gain the respect and trust of the students to prepare them for any exchange and interaction with the students, staff, faculty, and administration at each school. Further, Baltimore security officials stated that the attrition rate was minimal. Baltimore school police officers are employed year-round. Good recruiting, good training, the emphasis on maintaining high morale, and a reasonably structured 40-hour, Monday-Friday work week equal a more professional security force. In-service training by the school police force is prescribed and centers on law updates and related police subjects. Courses given are selected locally, and must have a written lesson plan that is reviewed, approved, and certified by the Maryland Police Training Commission.

The same commission prescribes annual service and firearms training. The school police conduct their own background checks of applicants. They feel a keen need for thorough

BENCHMARKING SCHOOL SECURITY IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

and extensive background investigations. Failure to do anything less is tantamount to negligence, and such failure may result in adverse outcomes.

In comparison, our review showed that DCPS lacked standardized regulations and policies on training procedures for security personnel. We also noted that the security service contractor failed to address transition problems concerning personnel training and placement data. This matter is addressed under another of our audits entitled “Audit of Background and Training of Security Personnel at the District of Columbia Public Schools” (OIG No. 03-2-1-14GA(c)).

Lastly, APS, MCPS, PPS, and SLPS all indicated that they have formal training for officers; however, they did not provide us with details of their training and background investigative programs.