

# A REPORT OF THE HERITAGE CENTER FOR DATA ANALYSIS

SCHOOL SAFETY IN WASHINGTON, D.C.:  
NEW DATA FOR THE 2007–2008 SCHOOL YEAR

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CDA09-06

August 28, 2009



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# SCHOOL SAFETY IN WASHINGTON, D.C.: NEW DATA FOR THE 2007–2008 SCHOOL YEAR

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As American students head back to school, many parents will worry about their children's safety at school during the coming year.<sup>1</sup> School safety will likely be a top concern of families living in Washington, D.C. In 2009, the U.S. Department of Education reported that 11.3 percent of D.C. high school students reported being "threatened or injured" with a weapon while on school property during the previous year—a rate well above the national average.<sup>2</sup>

In recent years, the District of Columbia school system has undergone significant reforms, including Mayor Adrian M. Fenty's school takeover initiative, an ambitious reform agenda under Chancellor Michelle Rhee, and implementation of the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program, a federal private school choice initiative. As District leaders, policymakers on Capitol Hill, and the Obama Administration consider the future of education reform in D.C. schools, ensuring that all children attend school in a safe learning environment should be a primary focus.

To help policymakers and the public understand the issue of school safety in D.C. schools, The Heritage Foundation submitted a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request to the District of Columbia Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) in November 2008 for information on the incidence of school

violence and criminal activity in D.C. schools, including public, private, and charter schools. In April 2009, the MPD fulfilled the request by providing a data set of 911 calls reporting crime and emergency incidents at District schools from January 2006 through February 2009.

This *CDA Report* presents an analysis of the data for the 2007–2008 school year, the most recent full school year for which data were available. While these data should be interpreted with caution, this analysis should help parents and the public to judge the relative safety of schools in the nation's capital by showing where the MPD has responded to reports of violence, crime, and other incidents at District schools.

The data reveal that during the 2007–2008 school year, police responded to more than 900 calls to 911 reporting violent incidents at the addresses of D.C. public schools and more than 1,300 events concerning property crimes. The data reveal a wide variance in the locations of these reported incidents. Some public schools with high rates of 911 calls are located within high-crime neighborhoods. In addition, while one should use these data with care when comparing the relative safety of public, charter, and private schools, this data set shows that a drastically higher rate of calls were made from D.C. public schools.

1. Gallup polling data suggest that many parents fear for the safety of their children while at school. For example, in 2007, a Gallup national survey found that 24 percent of responding parents feared for the safety of their oldest child while at school. Gallup News Service, "The Divide Between Public School Parents and Private School Parents," September 7, 2007, at <http://www.gallup.com/poll/28603/divide-between-public-school-parents-private-school-parents.aspx> (August 13, 2009).
2. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, *Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2008*, Table 4.2, April 2009, at [http://nces.ed.gov/programs/crimeindicators/crimeindicators2008/tables/table\\_04\\_2.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/crimeindicators/crimeindicators2008/tables/table_04_2.asp) (August 6, 2009).

The high rate of incidents at the addresses of many D.C. schools suggests that students would benefit if their families had greater ability to choose safe schools for their children. This is supported by surveys of families participating in the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program, which found that safety is an important factor in how families choose schools. Regrettably, the recent decision by the U.S. Department of Education to withdraw scholarships from approximately 200 students who were newly admitted to the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program will have the practical effect of forcing many children to attend less safe schools.

As District and federal policymakers consider future education reforms, school safety should be a priority in D.C. public and charter schools. Moreover, the federal government and the District should support providing more school choice options for District families, including greatly expanding the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program, to ensure that all children have a chance to attend safe schools of their parents' choice.

## **SCHOOL VIOLENCE AND CRIME IN D.C. SCHOOLS**

In May 2009, Latasha Bennett, a single mother of two children living in the District, testified before the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee about why she wanted to have the ability to choose her children's schools:

I already lost a nephew to the D.C. schools. You may remember the story Feb. 2, 2004 of James Richardson 17 year old, student at Ballou a star football player, who was shot inside the school. That was my nephew. His assigned neighborhood school was unsafe and had low expectations for the students. I wonder if he would be sitting here today as a success story, if a scholarship had been available for him to attend a private school. The scholarship provides my child an

opportunity to be in a quality educational environment and I know he will be a productive citizen in the future. I will not lose my babies when they are so bright and willing to learn.<sup>3</sup>

Discussions about reforming public education often focus on issues involving academic achievement, such as test scores and graduation rates. Yet for many parents like Latasha Bennett, a critical issue is whether their children can attend a safe school. Regrettably, past evidence and experience suggest that many children in the nation's capital attend schools that are not safe.

Statistics show that the D.C. public school system is one of the most dangerous in the country. In 2009, the U.S. Department of Education reported that 11.3 percent of D.C. high school students reported being "threatened or injured" with a weapon on school property during the previous year—a rate well above the national average and higher than most states.<sup>4</sup> Reports from nongovernmental sources have confirmed that many students in D.C. schools are exposed to violence and crime on a regular basis. For example, *The Washington Post* reported in 2007 that nine violent school incidents are reported on a typical day in Washington, D.C.<sup>5</sup>

Many D.C. children are also exposed to violence outside of school. A 2001 analysis by the Urban Institute found that most assaults and robberies against juveniles in the District occur between 3 p.m. and 4 p.m., at the end of the traditional school day. The weekday after-school commute had the highest frequency of crimes against District juveniles.<sup>6</sup>

Dangerous incidents on the campuses of many D.C. schools are of great concern to parents and a key reason why many families have sought to take advantage of programs, such as the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program, that allow families to choose their children's school. Focus groups and

3. Latasha Bennett, "The D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program," testimony before the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, U.S. Senate, May 13, 2009, at [http://hsgac.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=Files.View&FileStore\\_id=0ad0fa2b-0d38-4677-971b-15672e268a7e](http://hsgac.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=Files.View&FileStore_id=0ad0fa2b-0d38-4677-971b-15672e268a7e) (August 13, 2009).
4. U.S. Department of Education, *Indicators of School Crime and Safety*, Table 4.2.
5. Dan Keating and V. Dion Haynes, "Can D.C. Schools Be Fixed?" *The Washington Post*, June 10, 2007, p. A1, at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/06/09/AR2007060901415.html> (August 13, 2009).
6. Caterina Gouvis, Calvin Johnson, Christine Depies DeStefano, Amy Solomon, and Michelle Waul, "Violence in the District of Columbia: Patterns from 1999," Urban Institute, March 2001, at <http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/DCviolence.pdf> (August 13, 2009).

surveys of families participating in the program have confirmed the importance of safety. A 2009 evaluation published by the U.S. Department of Education reported that 17 percent of the parents of the first cohort of children participating in the program listed school safety as their most important reason for seeking a scholarship.<sup>7</sup>

In 2005, the D.C. Council and Mayor Anthony Williams finalized legislation giving the MPD responsibility for school security for the District of Columbia Public Schools. Beginning with the 2005–2006 school year, the MPD deployed a combination of sworn police officers and private security personnel to provide an enhanced presence in the District's schools. Under the supervision of the MPD's new School Security Division, District-based Hawk One Security hired, screened, and assigned 300 personnel to campuses in all eight wards, where they served alongside 99 police officers.<sup>8</sup>

The change followed a vigorous debate in the community and numerous city council hearings about school safety, largely in response to the fatal shooting of James Richardson, Ms. Bennett's nephew, at Ballou Senior High School in February 2004.<sup>9</sup> Richardson was shot by another student who had entered the school through a side door that had been left ajar. The victim was standing outside the school's first-floor day care center, and the resulting confusion was exacerbated by crowded hallways caused by a two-hour delay in opening school due to wintry road conditions.<sup>10</sup>

A September 2004 report by the District's Inspector General identified numerous, serious security weaknesses: "The District's schools remain vulnerable to planned or random acts of violence that could

otherwise be reduced through improved security measures and the implementation of sound policy guidelines."<sup>11</sup> The report's recommendations included securing school doors, fixing or replacing broken surveillance equipment, and maintaining better records.

Two years later, the D.C. Council passed legislation giving Mayor Fenty control of the city's public schools. The Master Education Plan presented by the Fenty administration in February 2006 included as one of its five core beliefs that "all students should be educated in a safe, healthy and educationally appropriate environment."<sup>12</sup> In October 2007, Fenty announced a detailed plan to improve security and safety. That plan's perimeter security project was a central component and included fixing fire code violations and installing new locks on doors. These improvements centered around eight high schools (Ballou, Anacostia, Coolidge, Cardozo, Roosevelt, Wilson, Spingarn, and Dunbar) and Johnson Junior High School.<sup>13</sup>

In the two years since the Fenty administration launched its school safety reform initiatives, the absence of new widely reported tragedies has provided some sense of progress. School leaders certainly deserve credit for avoiding an increase in violence, which some observers had predicted following the system-wide school closings and consolidations at the start of the 2008–2009 school year.

Yet the time has come for the District of Columbia to review the condition of school safety in all D.C. public schools. Have D.C. schools become safer in the wake of these reforms? Could D.C. do more to ensure that all children have a safe educational experience?

7. School safety was the second most cited reason after school quality. Patrick Wolf, Babette Gutmann, Michael Puma, Brian Kisida, Lou Rizzo, and Nada Eissa, *Evaluation of the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program: Impacts After Three Years*, U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, March 2009, at <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/pubs/20094050/pdf/20094050.pdf> (August 6, 2009).
8. District of Columbia Metropolitan Police Department, "What's New," August 25, 2005, p. 1.
9. V. Dion Haynes, "New Firm Urged for D.C. School Security," *The Washington Post*, May 24, 2005, p. B1.
10. District of Columbia Metropolitan Police Department, "Ballou Senior High School Safety Plan," 2nd draft, February 18, 2004, p. 2, at <http://dcwatch.com/police/040218.htm> (August 13, 2009).
11. Valerie Strauss, "Report Finds Flaws in D.C. Schools' Security," *The Washington Post*, September 14, 2004, p. B1, at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A18920-2004Sep13.html> (August 13, 2009).
12. District of Columbia Public Schools, "All Students Succeeding: A Master Education Plan for a System of Great Schools," February 2006, p. 9, at [http://www.k12.dc.us/master/MEP\\_final.pdf](http://www.k12.dc.us/master/MEP_final.pdf) (August 13, 2009).
13. News release, "Fenty Announces Strategy for Increased School Security," Office of the Mayor of the District of Columbia, October 22, 2007, at <http://www.dc.gov/mayor/news/release.asp?id=1166&mon=200710> (August 13, 2009).

## SCHOOL SAFETY IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

To help to answer these questions, The Heritage Foundation submitted a FOIA request to the Metropolitan Police Department in November 2008 requesting records of crime incidents in D.C. public, private, and charter schools.<sup>14</sup> The MPD filled this request on April 14, 2009, by providing 911 tape data of calls for crime and emergency incidents at the addresses of D.C. schools from January 1, 2006, through February 5, 2009. The data set included more than 25,000 reported incidents documenting more than 300 different types of crime and emergency incidents reported at the addresses of D.C. public, charter, and private schools during the period. The data included non-criminal incidents that were handled by the D.C. Fire and Emergency Medical Services and D.C. Department of Public Works.

The data presented in this report are limited to crime-related incidents reported to the MPD during the 2007–2008 school year, excluding the summer months. This is the most recent full school year for which data were available.<sup>15</sup> The figures reflect the level of crime-related incidents reported to the police during all hours of the day and night during the 2007–2008 school year. Thus, the crime data presented in this analysis represent the general amount of crime reported to occur at school locations.

Given that schools with more students are expected to have higher levels of crime-related inci-

dents than schools with fewer students, the number of reported incidents per 100 students was calculated based on school enrollment data.<sup>16</sup> Expressing the crime-related incidents as rates allows comparison of the schools.<sup>17</sup> For instance, schools with larger student populations would be expected to have more reported crimes than schools with smaller student populations. Using rates instead of raw counts adjusts the crime data for student enrollment. However, complete enrollment figures for each public, charter, and private school were not obtained. Thus, the rates were calculated only for schools for which enrollment data were obtained.<sup>18</sup>

The data set of 911 call incidents should be interpreted with some caution because it documents calls for assistance in response to some event that a person believed required police attention without proof that an incident or crime had actually occurred. Information about the outcome of the call, such as whether an arrest was made or charges were filed, was not provided. Some of the incidents recorded in the data were likely unfounded. Conversely, some crimes were committed without generating a 911 call; therefore, no incidents were reported.

Therefore, the 911 data provided by the Metropolitan Police Department should be analyzed with a clear understanding of what they represent: calls reporting that some incident had occurred at a school. However, with these cautions in mind, people concerned about the issue of school safety can view these data as an approximation of the frequency

14. For more information, see Shanea Watkins and Dan Lips, “D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program: Improving Student Safety,” Heritage Foundation *WebMemo* No. 2437, May 13, 2009, at <http://www.heritage.org/research/education/wm2437.cfm>.
15. For the analysis, 911 calls for incidents that do not appear to be crime-related, such as animal complaints, fire alarms, disabled autos, fireworks, tow requests, unregistered autos, and traffic complaints, were excluded.
16. Enrollment data for D.C. public schools were obtained from the District of Columbia Public Schools. Charter school enrollment data were obtained from District of Columbia Public Charter School Board, Audited Enrollment Figures, 2007–2008. Private school enrollment data were obtained from U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Private School Universe Survey, 2007–2008, at <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pss/index.asp> (August 13, 2009).
17. For the complete set of compiled and calculated data used in this report, see The Heritage Foundation, “Crime-Related Incidents at D.C. Public Schools,” August 2009, at [http://www.heritage.org/research/education/upload/DC\\_school\\_violence.xls](http://www.heritage.org/research/education/upload/DC_school_violence.xls).
18. In a few cases, more than one D.C. public school is located in the same place. In these cases, the student enrollment figures were combined. For the school year 2007–2008, 2,106 students were enrolled at Ballou Senior High School and Ballou School to Aid Youth (STAY): 1,459 at Ballou Senior High School and 647 at Ballou STAY. In addition, the enrollment figures for the following schools were combined: H.D. Woodson Senior High School and Business and Finance Academy SWSC at Woodson Senior High School; Choice Middle and Choice Senior High Schools; Emilia Reggio SWSC at Peabody Elementary School and Peabody Elementary School; Pre-Engineering SWSC at Dunbar High School and Dunbar High School; Moten Center and Moten Elementary School; Roosevelt STAY and Roosevelt Senior High School; and Spingarn Center, Spingarn STAY, and Spingarn Senior High School.

with which children attending D.C. schools are probably exposed to a variety of troubling incidents at school.

### INCIDENTS OF CRIME REPORTED AT SCHOOLS

While this data set shows that the police department responded to many fewer calls to charter and private schools, this information should be interpreted with caution, and readers should be careful to understand the differences among public, charter, and private schools when drawing comparisons. The MPD assumed responsibility for security for D.C. public schools in 2005, making it the first responder to reports of trouble and an actively alert presence in schools. Charter schools and private schools in the District of Columbia have different arrangements for the provision of school security, and many contract with private security providers.

Because of the different arrangements, District public schools would be expected to generate more 911 calls to the police department for incidents that did not involve serious crimes, such as disorderly or disruptive behavior, which school leaders may normally handle internally without police involvement. Further, school administration can influence the level of crime and disorder that occurs in schools. Schools that provide students with understandable rules, accompanied by appropriate rewards and sanctions, appear to have less disorder.<sup>19</sup>

In addition to the different security arrangements and administrative techniques at D.C. public, charter, and private schools, criminogenic (risk) factors may explain differences in reported incidents of crime at these

### Crime-Related Incidents at D.C. Public Schools

As Reported to the Metropolitan Police Department During School Year 2007–2008

Type of Crime	All D.C. Public Schools	D.C. Schools with Enrollment Data	
	Incidents	Incidents	Rate per 100 students
<b>Violent</b>			
Homicide	1	1	0.002
Sex Offenses	43	41	0.09
Robbery with Weapon	17	17	0.04
Robbery Excluding Weapon	41	41	0.09
Aggravated Assault	114	105	0.23
Simple Assault	648	608	1.32
Assaulting a Police Officer	15	15	0.03
Domestic Violence	33	32	0.07
<b>Total Violent Incidents</b>	<b>912</b>	<b>860</b>	<b>1.87</b>
<b>Property</b>			
Burglary	82	78	0.17
Theft	446	441	0.96
Theft from Auto	304	301	0.65
Stolen Auto	205	202	0.44
Arson	8	8	0.02
Property Damage	293	292	0.63
<b>Total Property Incidents</b>	<b>1,338</b>	<b>1,322</b>	<b>2.87</b>
<b>Other</b>			
Suicide	13	13	0.03
Drug Offenses	41	41	0.09
Disorderly Conduct	461	459	1.00
Sounds of Gunshots	49	48	0.10
Indecent Exposure	9	8	0.02
Weapons offense	0	0	0.00
Police Officer in Trouble	3	3	0.01
Other Crimes	674	671	1.46
<b>Total Other Incidents</b>	<b>1,250</b>	<b>1,243</b>	<b>2.70</b>
<b>Total Incidents</b>	<b>3,500</b>	<b>3,425</b>	<b>7.40</b>
<b>Number of Schools</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>128</b>	
<b>Enrollment</b>		<b>46,109</b>	

Sources: Heritage Foundation calculations based on data from District of Columbia Metropolitan Police Department, 911 tape of crime incidents in District of Columbia schools, Freedom of Information Act Request No. 09-125; District of Columbia Public Schools, public school enrollment data; District of Columbia Public Charter School Board, Audited Enrollment Figures, 2007–08; and U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Private School Universe Survey, 2007–2008, at <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pss/index.asp> (August 13, 2009).

Table 1 • CDA 09-06  [heritage.org](http://heritage.org)

19. Denise C. Gottfredson, David B. Wilson, and Stacy Shroban Najaka, “School-Based Crime Prevention,” in Lawrence W. Sherman, David P. Farrington, Brandon C. Welsh, and Doris Layton MacKenzie, eds., *Evidence-Based Crime Prevention* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 56–164.

schools. First, charter and private schools may be located in safer neighborhoods than D.C. public schools. Second, the students enrolled in charter and private schools may have behavioral characteristics that are markedly different from those of students attending public schools.

**Public Schools.** During the 2007–2008 school year, 3,500 incidences of crime were reported to the Metropolitan Police Department from D.C. public schools: 912 incidences of violent crime, 1,338 incidences of property crimes, and 1,250 other incidences. These incidents occurred during all days and times during the school year. (See Table 1.)

- The 912 violent incidents (1.9 violent incidents per 100 students) included one homicide.<sup>20</sup>
- Simple assault, the most prevalent type of violent incident reported, accounted for 648 reports (1.3 per 100 students). In addition, there were 114 aggravated assaults (0.2 per 100 students).
- There were 1,338 incidences of property crime reported (2.9 per 100 students).
- The most prevalent property incident was theft, of which there were 446 reported incidents (1.0 per 100 students).
- There were 1,250 incidents of other crime-related activities, including 461 reported incidents of disorderly conduct (1.0 per 100 students).
- The sound of gunshots was reported in 49 incidents.

**Public Charter Schools.** During the 2007–2008 school year, 82 incidences of crime were reported to 911 from D.C. charter schools. (See Table 2.) These included:

- 17 reported violent incidents (0.08 per 100 students), which were all simple assaults;

### Crime-Related Incidents at D.C. Charter Schools

As Reported to the Metropolitan Police Department During School Year 2007–2008

Type of Crime	All D.C. Charter Schools	D.C. Charter Schools with Enrollment Data	
	Incidents	Incidents	Rate per 100 students
<b>Violent</b>			
Homicide	0	0	0.00
Sex Offenses	0	0	0.00
Robbery with Weapon	0	0	0.00
Robbery Excluding Weapon	0	0	0.00
Aggravated Assault	0	0	0.00
Simple Assault	17	17	0.08
Assaulting a Police Officer	0	0	0.00
Domestic Violence	0	0	0.00
<b>Total Violent Incidents</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>0.08</b>
<b>Property</b>			
Burglary	0	0	0.00
Theft	21	21	0.10
Theft from Auto	1	1	0.00
Stolen Auto	2	2	0.01
Arson	0	0	0.00
Property Damage	4	4	0.02
<b>Total Property Incidents</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>0.13</b>
<b>Other</b>			
Suicide	4	4	0.02
Drug Offenses	0	0	0.00
Disorderly Conduct	3	3	0.01
Sounds of Gunshots	2	2	0.01
Indecent Exposure	0	0	0.00
Weapons Offense	0	0	0.00
Police Officer in Trouble	0	0	0.00
Other Crimes	28	28	0.13
<b>Total Other Incidents</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>0.18</b>
<b>Total Incidents</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>0.39</b>
<b>Number of Schools</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>51</b>	
<b>Enrollment</b>		<b>21,054</b>	

Sources: Heritage Foundation calculations based on data from District of Columbia Metropolitan Police Department, 911 tape of crime incidents in District of Columbia schools, Freedom of Information Act Request No. 09-125; District of Columbia Public Schools, public school enrollment data; District of Columbia Public Charter School Board, Audited Enrollment Figures, 2007–08; and U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Private School Universe Survey, 2007–2008, at <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pss/index.asp> (August 13, 2009).

Table 2 • CDA 09-06  [heritage.org](http://heritage.org)

- 28 incidents of property crime (0.1 per 100 students);
- 21 thefts (0.10 per 100 students), the most prevalent type of property incident;

- Three incidents of disorderly conduct (0.01 incidents per 100 students); and
- Two reports of gunshots.

**Private Schools.** During the 2007–2008 school year, 232 incidences of crime were reported to 911 from D.C. private schools. (See Table 3.) These included:

- 28 violent incidents (0.16 per 100 students);
- 14 simple assaults (0.09 per 100 students), which were the majority of the reported violent incidents;
- 131 incidents of property crime (0.77 incidents per 100 students);
- 58 thefts (0.35 per 100 students), the most prevalent type of property incident; and
- 30 incidents of disorderly conduct (0.17 per 100 students).

### SCHOOLS WITH POTENTIALLY SERIOUS SAFETY PROBLEMS

Reviewing the MPD responses to 911 calls by school reveals that certain schools appear to have greater problems with school violence and safety. Table 4 and Table 5 show the numbers and rates of incidences reported at select schools.

**Senior High Schools.** Dunbar Senior High School (Ward 5) and Anacostia Senior High School (Ward 8) were the two senior high schools with the highest numbers of police responses to violent crime complaints. Dunbar had 55 calls for aggravated and simple assaults, while Anacostia had 47 calls. The schools were of comparable size, with both enrolling over 900 students in grades 9–12 during the 2007–2008 school year.

## Crime-Related Incidents at D.C. Private Schools

As Reported to the Metropolitan Police Department During School Year 2007–2008

Type of Crime	All D.C. Private Schools	D.C. Private Schools with Enrollment Data	
	Incidents	Incidents	Rate per 100 students
<b>Violent</b>			
Homicide	0	0	0.00
Sex Offenses	4	4	0.02
Robbery with Weapon	2	1	0.01
Robbery Excluding Weapon	0	0	0.00
Aggravated Assault	7	6	0.04
Simple Assault	14	14	0.09
Assaulting a Police Officer	0	0	0.00
Domestic Violence	1	1	0.01
<b>Total Violent Incidents</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>0.16</b>
<b>Property</b>			
Burglary	6	4	0.02
Theft	58	58	0.35
Theft from Auto	48	48	0.29
Stolen Auto	12	10	0.06
Arson	0	0	0.00
Property Damage	7	7	0.04
<b>Total Property Incidents</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>0.77</b>
<b>Other</b>			
Suicide	0	0	0.00
Drug Offenses	1	1	0.01
Disorderly Conduct	30	28	0.17
Sounds of Gunshots	1	0	0.00
Indecent Exposure	2	2	0.01
Weapons Offense	0	0	0.00
Police Officer in Trouble	0	0	0.00
Other Crimes	39	37	0.23
<b>Total Other Incidents</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>0.41</b>
<b>Total Incidents</b>	<b>232</b>	<b>221</b>	<b>1.35</b>
<b>Number of Schools</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>84</b>	
<b>Enrollment</b>		<b>16,411</b>	

**Sources:** Heritage Foundation calculations based on data from District of Columbia Metropolitan Police Department, 911 tape of crime incidents in District of Columbia schools, Freedom of Information Act Request No. 09-125; District of Columbia Public Schools, public school enrollment data; District of Columbia Public Charter School Board, Audited Enrollment Figures, 2007–08; and U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Private School Universe Survey, 2007–2008, at <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pss/index.asp> (August 13, 2009).

Table 3 • CDA 09-06  [heritage.org](http://heritage.org)

20. The single homicide was committed at Moten Elementary School on Wednesday, October 3, 2007. At approximately 9:54 a.m., police were called to the scene after a body was found near the rear of Wilkinson Elementary School, where Moten Elementary School was located. See press release, “Homicide in the Rear of Pomeroy Road, SE,” Metropolitan Police Department, October 3, 2007, at <http://newsroom.dc.gov/show.aspx/agency/mpdc/section/2/release/11937/year/2007> (August 12, 2009).



# Crime-Related Incidents at Selected D.C. Public High Schools

As Reported to the Metropolitan Police Department During School Year 2007–2008

Type of Crime	Anacostia Senior High School	Ballou Senior High School	Cardozo Senior High School	Coolidge Senior High School	Dunbar Senior High School	Eastern Senior High School	Roosevelt Senior High School	Spingarn Senior High School
	Incidents	Rate*	Incidents	Rate*	Incidents	Rate*	Incidents	Rate*
<b>Violent Crime</b>								
Homicide	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Sex Offenses	0	0.0	1	0.1	0	0.0	4	0.3
Robbery with Weapon	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.1
Robbery Excluding Weapon	3	0.3	1	0.0	7	0.8	1	0.1
Aggravated Assault	3	0.3	1	0.0	4	0.5	5	0.4
Simple Assault	44	4.7	33	1.6	14	1.6	17	1.5
Assaulting a Police Officer	0	0.0	2	0.1	0	0.0	0	0.0
Domestic Violence	10	1.1	2	0.1	0	0.0	0	0.0
<b>Total Violent Incidents</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>2.4</b>
<b>Property Crime</b>								
Burglary	0	0.0	2	0.1	0	0.0	10	0.9
Theft	26	2.7	18	0.9	7	0.8	13	1.1
Theft from Auto	2	0.2	21	1.0	6	0.7	4	0.3
Stolen Auto	5	0.5	28	1.3	8	0.9	0	0.0
Arson	4	0.4	2	0.1	0	0.0	0	0.0
Property Damage	5	0.5	34	1.6	12	1.4	14	1.2
<b>Total Property Incidents</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>3.5</b>
<b>Other Crime</b>								
Suicide	1	0.1	1	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Drug Offenses	2	0.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Disorderly Conduct	9	1.0	34	1.6	12	1.4	4	0.3
Sounds of Gunshots	0	0.0	4	0.2	1	0.1	0	0.0
Indecent Exposure	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Weapons Offense	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Police Officer in Trouble	1	0.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Other Crimes	19	2.0	29	1.4	14	1.6	12	1.0
<b>Total Other Incidents</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>1.4</b>
<b>Total Incidents</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>14.2</b>	<b>219</b>	<b>10.4</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>9.7</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>7.3</b>
<b>Enrollment</b>	<b>946</b>		<b>2,106</b>	<b>710</b>	<b>973</b>	<b>915</b>	<b>1,160</b>	<b>115</b>

\* Per 100 students.

Sources: Heritage Foundation calculations based on data from District of Columbia Metropolitan Police Department, 911 tape of crime incidents in District of Columbia schools; Freedom of Information Act Request No. 09-125; District of Columbia Public Schools, public school enrollment data; District of Columbia Public Charter School Board, Audited Enrollment Figures, 2007–08; and U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Private School Universe Survey, 2007–2008, at <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pss/index.asp> (August 13, 2009).

The police department also responded to a high number of calls at other high schools. Eastern Senior High School (Ward 6), with more than 900 students enrolled, had 38 aggravated and simple assault reports. Ballou Senior High (Ward 8), the largest D.C. public high school, with more than 2,100 students enrolled, had 34 aggravated and simple assault reports. It also had the highest incidences of disorderly behavior and robbery incidents involving a gun or knife.

Coolidge Senior High School (Ward 4), Roosevelt Senior High School (Ward 4), and Spingarn Senior High School (Ward 5) each had 20 to 29 reports of aggravated and simple assault. Roosevelt, with an enrollment of 1,100 students, was the largest of the three schools.<sup>21</sup> Under the new principal hired for the 2007–2008 school year as part of its restructuring plan, Cardozo Senior High School (Ward 1) had 18 reports of aggravated and simple assaults and seven robbery incidents.

**Middle Schools.** Among D.C. middle schools during the 2007–2008 school year, Kelly Miller Middle School (Ward 7) had 14 reports of aggravated and simple assault, and Shaw Middle School (Ward 2) had 13 reports. Each school also had the highest middle school totals for police responses in other categories, including disorderly conduct and “other” incidents. Kelly Miller had 55 crime-related incidents, and Shaw Middle School had 44 incidents.

**Elementary Schools.** Perhaps the most disquieting data relate to the numbers of police responses to calls from District elementary schools. Webb Elementary School (Ward 5) had 35 reported incidents of aggravated and simple assaults and six responses for disorderly calls. In Ward 8, Moten Elementary had 30 aggravated and simple assault incidents; Ketcham Elementary, 25 incidents; Stanton Elementary, 17 incidents; and McCogney Elementary, 15 incidents.

### “PERSISTENTLY DANGEROUS” SCHOOLS

While many crime-related incidents occur at some of these schools, it is unclear whether these schools should be labeled “persistently dangerous”

under federal guidelines under the No Child Left Behind Act. On March 31, 2006, the D.C. Board of Education approved a final rule that established criteria for “persistently dangerous” schools. The notice amended Chapter 38 of the D.C. Code, effective at the beginning with the 2005–2006 school year, to define as “persistently dangerous” any public or public charter school where:

the annual number of officially reported violent crimes against students, on school grounds, over a period of two consecutive years is:

- (a) Equal to or greater than five (5) for students with enrolments of 500 students or less, or
- (b) Equal to or greater than 1% of the school’s official membership, for schools with enrollments of 501 students or more, and
- (c) Includes any of the crimes of murder, attempted murder, first or second degree sexual assault, assault with intent to kill, and assault with intent to commit first or second degree sexual abuse.<sup>22</sup>

The rulemaking was undertaken in response to a requirement under the No Child Left Behind Act that each state receiving funds under the act establish and implement a policy allowing a student attending a persistently dangerous public elementary or secondary school to attend a safe public school within the local education agency, including a charter school.

Since the 911 data do not reveal the number of officially reported crimes as defined by the D.C. Code,<sup>23</sup> we are not in a position to determine whether any of these D.C. public schools should be listed as persistently dangerous under D.C. and federal law. However, the high numbers of violent acts reported to the MPD at these schools suggests that some D.C. schools could qualify as persistently dangerous under the District’s official rule.

Under federal law, students who attend persistently dangerous schools or who are the victim of a violent criminal offense while in school must be

21. A total of 1,160 students were enrolled at Roosevelt Senior High School and Roosevelt STAY: 844 at Roosevelt Senior High School and 316 at Roosevelt STAY.

22. District of Columbia Board of Education, “Adopting Final Rulemaking Regarding School Choice Options for Schools Deemed Persistently Dangerous,” SR06-28, May 15, 2006, at [http://www.seo.dc.gov/seoframes.asp?doc=/seo/lib/seo/sboe/resolutions/2006/SR06-28\\_Final\\_Rulemaking\\_Persistently\\_Dangerous\\_Schools\\_51506.pdf](http://www.seo.dc.gov/seoframes.asp?doc=/seo/lib/seo/sboe/resolutions/2006/SR06-28_Final_Rulemaking_Persistently_Dangerous_Schools_51506.pdf) (August 13, 2009).

# Crime-Related Incidents at Selected D.C. Public Middle and Elementary Schools

As Reported to the Metropolitan Police Department During School Year 2007–2008

Type of Crime	Kelly Miller Middle School		Shaw Middle School		Ketcham Elementary School		Moten Elementary School		Stanton Elementary School		McGogney Elementary School		Thomas Elementary School		Webb Elementary School	
	Incidents	Rate*	Incidents	Rate*	Incidents	Rate*	Incidents	Rate*	Incidents	Rate*	Incidents	Rate*	Incidents	Rate*	Incidents	Rate*
<b>Violent Crime</b>																
Homicide	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.4	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Sex Offenses	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.3	0	0.0	2	0.6
Robbery with Weapon	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Robbery Excluding Weapon	0	0.0	0	0.0	4	1.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.3	0	0.0
Aggravated Assault	4	1.3	1	0.6	5	1.6	6	2.2	2	0.5	2	0.5	0	0.0	5	1.5
Simple Assault	10	3.2	12	7.8	20	6.4	24	8.7	15	4.0	13	3.6	1	0.3	30	9.2
Assaulting a Police Officer	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Domestic Violence	1	0.3	4	2.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.3	0	0.0	0	0.0
<b>Total Violent Incidents</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>4.8</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>11.0</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>9.6</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>11.3</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>4.7</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0.7</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>11.3</b>
<b>Property Crime</b>																
Burglary	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	0.5	0	0.0	0	0.0
Theft	5	1.6	2	1.3	1	0.3	2	0.7	3	0.8	3	0.8	0	0.0	7	2.1
Theft from Auto	4	1.3	2	1.3	2	0.6	0	0.0	5	1.3	6	1.6	18	6.3	0	0.0
Stolen Auto	6	1.9	3	1.9	4	1.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	4	1.4	6	1.8
Arson	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Property Damage	2	0.6	4	2.6	3	1.0	0	0.0	3	0.8	7	1.9	4	1.4	4	1.2
<b>Total Property Incidents</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>5.4</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>7.1</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0.7</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>4.9</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>9.1</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>5.2</b>
<b>Other Crime</b>																
Suicide	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Drug Offenses	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Disorderly Conduct	5	1.6	5	3.2	8	2.6	11	4.0	10	2.6	7	1.9	5	1.7	6	1.8
Sounds of Gunshots	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.4	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	0.6
Indecent Exposure	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	0.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Weapons Offense	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Police Officer in Trouble	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Other Crimes	18	5.8	11	7.1	7	2.2	15	5.5	9	2.4	21	5.8	37	12.9	10	3.1
<b>Total Other Incidents</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>7.3</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>10.4</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>4.8</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>9.8</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>5.8</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>7.7</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>14.6</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>5.5</b>
<b>Total Incidents</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>17.6</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>28.6</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>17.6</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>21.8</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>13.2</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>17.3</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>24.4</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>22.0</b>
<b>Enrollment</b>		<b>313</b>		<b>154</b>		<b>312</b>		<b>275</b>		<b>379</b>		<b>364</b>		<b>287</b>		<b>327</b>

\* Per 100 students.

Sources: Heritage Foundation calculations based on data from District of Columbia Metropolitan Police Department; 911 tape of crime incidents in District of Columbia schools; Freedom of Information Act; Request No. 09-125; District of Columbia Public Schools, public school enrollment data; District of Columbia Public Charter School Board, Audited Enrollment Figures, 2007–08; and U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Private School Universe Survey, 2007–2008, at <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pss/index.asp> (August 13, 2009).

offered a transfer to a different school. The U.S. Department of Education has summarized this requirement:

The Notice of Final Deadlines...requires States to complete identification of persistently dangerous schools in time to permit local educational agencies (LEAs) to offer, at least 14 days before the start of the 2003–2004 school year, and each school year thereafter, the required transfer option to students attending persistently dangerous schools. Beginning with the start of the 2003–2004 school year, LEAs also must offer, at least 14 days before the start of the 2003–2004 school year, and each school year thereafter, the opportunity to transfer to a safe school to students who are victims of violent criminal offenses while in or on the school grounds of a public elementary or secondary school that the student attends.<sup>24</sup>

Despite this requirement, it is unclear whether the District of Columbia Public Schools has identified which schools are persistently dangerous or has offered eligible students the option of transferring to different public schools in accordance with federal guidelines. With the 2009–2010 school year starting soon, the Web site for D.C. public schools does not provide a list of persistently dangerous schools. As of the publication of this paper, the D.C. Office of the State Superintendent of Education has not answered an online request filed by the authors in this regard.

## SCHOOL CHOICE AND SCHOOL SAFETY

One strategy for improving students' ability to attend safe schools is to give families the opportunity to choose which schools their children attend. Students living in D.C. are assigned to a public

school based on their residence. However, students can choose other schools within the public school system through the out-of-boundary placement process or by enrolling in a public charter school. In addition, since 2004, thousands of low-income children living in the District have attended private school thanks to the federal D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program, which provides scholarships worth up to \$7,500 for private school tuition to qualifying students.

The 911 tape data support previous evaluations that found that the parents of students participating in the Opportunity Scholarship Program were more satisfied with the safety of their children's chosen schools. It also suggests that safety may be a factor that influences the many D.C. parents who are choosing charter schools for their children. Today, approximately one-third of the District's student population (more than 25,000 students) attends charter schools.<sup>25</sup> These data show that police are responding to many fewer calls at charter schools, so it is possible that many charter schools are providing students with a learning environment that is safer than the environment provided by traditional public schools.

**Denying School Choice, Undermining Student Safety.** Regrettably, the data also suggest that limiting the school choice options of D.C. families will force some children to attend assigned schools where they will likely be exposed to more incidents of crime and violence.

This year, Congress and the Obama Administration have taken several steps that threaten to end the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program. For example, on April 6, 2009, the U.S. Department of Education sent a letter notifying the families of 216 students who had recently been admitted to the

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23. The D.C. Code defines the term "crime of violence" as including "aggravated assault; act of terrorism; arson; assault on a police officer (felony); assault with a dangerous weapon; assault with intent to kill, commit first degree sexual abuse, commit second degree sexual abuse, or commit child sexual abuse; assault with intent to commit any other offense; burglary; carjacking; armed carjacking; child sexual abuse; cruelty to children in the first degree; extortion or blackmail accompanied by threats of violence; gang recruitment, participation, or retention by the use or threatened use of force, coercion, or intimidation; kidnapping; malicious disfigurement; manslaughter; manufacture or possession of a weapon of mass destruction; mayhem; murder; robbery; sexual abuse in the first, second, or third degrees; use, dissemination, or detonation of a weapon of mass destruction; or an attempt or conspiracy to commit any of the foregoing offenses." D.C. Code § 23-1331.4.
24. U.S. Department of Education, "Unsafe School Choice Option," May 2004, at <http://www.ed.gov/programs/dvpformula/gfsaguid03.doc> (August 10, 2009).
25. District of Columbia Public Charter School Board, "Race to the Top Setting the Pace for Education Reform in Washington, D.C.," July 30, 2009, p. 14, at [http://www.dcpubliccharter.com/publications/docs/PCSB\\_AR2009.pdf](http://www.dcpubliccharter.com/publications/docs/PCSB_AR2009.pdf) (August 13, 2009).

scholarship program that their children would no longer be eligible for scholarships.<sup>26</sup> The department's decision to withdraw these scholarships forced these low-income families to find new schools for their children for the coming school year. Many will likely have no choice but to attend the assigned public schools in their neighborhoods.

In July, The Heritage Foundation obtained a list of the 70 public schools to which these students have been assigned since the U.S. Department of Education withdrew their Opportunity Scholarships. Overall, this analysis found that these 70 schools had many reported incidents of violence and crime. (See Table 6.)

- For school year 2007–2008, the MPD received reports of 2,379 crime-related incidents from these schools, including 666 violent incidents (2.7 per 100 students), of which one was a homicide.
- Simple and aggravated assault was the most prevalent violent incident, consisting of 555 reported assaults (2.3 per 100 students).
- The schools reported 855 property-crime incidents (3.5 per 100 students), including 278 thefts (1.1 incidents per 100 students).
- There were also numerous reports of other crime-related incidents, including 306 incidents of disorderly conduct (1.3 per 100 students)<sup>27</sup> and 43 reports of gunshots.

These reported incidents of crime were not evenly distributed among the 70 schools in school year 2007–2008, and the rate of reported violence was noticeably higher at some schools. For students who are assigned to attend the following schools, the

### Crime-Related Incidents at the Assigned D.C. Public Schools of Denied Opportunity Scholarship Program Applicants

For Applicants of School Year 2009–2010, as Reported to the Metropolitan Police Department During School Year 2007–2008

Type of Crime	Incidents	Rate per 100 students
<b>Violent</b>		
Homicide	1	0.00
Sex Offenses	23	0.09
Robbery with Weapon	14	0.06
Robbery Excluding Weapon	34	0.14
Aggravated Assault	85	0.35
Simple Assault	470	1.93
Assaulting a Police Officer	14	0.06
Domestic Violence	25	0.10
<b>Total Violent Incidents</b>	<b>666</b>	<b>2.73</b>
<b>Property</b>		
Burglary	28	0.11
Theft	278	1.14
Theft from Auto	195	0.80
Stolen Auto	150	0.62
Arson	8	0.03
Property Damage	196	0.80
<b>Total Property Incidents</b>	<b>855</b>	<b>3.51</b>
<b>Other</b>		
Suicide	5	0.02
Drug Offenses	31	0.13
Disorderly Conduct	306	1.26
Sounds of Gunshots	43	0.18
Indecent Exposure	6	0.02
Weapons Offense	0	0.00
Police Officer in Trouble	3	0.01
Other Crimes	464	1.90
<b>Total Other Incidents</b>	<b>858</b>	<b>3.52</b>
<b>Total Incidents</b>	<b>2,379</b>	<b>9.76</b>
<b>Number of Schools</b>	<b>55</b>	
<b>Enrollment</b>	<b>24,364</b>	

Sources: Heritage Foundation calculations based on data from District of Columbia Metropolitan Police Department, 911 tape of crime incidents in District of Columbia schools, Freedom of Information Act Request No. 09-125; District of Columbia Public Schools, public school enrollment data; District of Columbia Public Charter School Board, Audited Enrollment Figures, 2007–08; and U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Private School Universe Survey, 2007–2008, at <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pss/index.asp> (August 13, 2009).

Table 6 • CDA 09-06  [heritage.org](http://heritage.org)

26. Editorial, “Presumed Dead,” *The Washington Post*, April 11, 2009, p. A12, at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/04/10/AR2009041003073.html> (August 19, 2009).

loss of their scholarship will result in attending schools that have reported many incidents of violence and crime:

- Five students who applied to the Opportunity Scholarship Program were assigned to Anacostia Senior High school, where 60 violent incidents (6.3 per 100 students) were reported. Of these, 47 reports (5.0 per 100 students) were for simple and aggravated assaults.
- Three applicants were assigned to Ballou Senior High School, where 46 violent incidents (2.2 per 100 students) were reported. Eight robberies were reported, including seven robberies involving firearms or knives. There were also four reports of gunshots.
- Three applicants are assigned to Dunbar Senior High. In 2007–2008, Dunbar had 65 reports of violent incidents (6.7 per 100 student) and 55 simple and aggravated assaults (5.6 per 100 students).
- Eleven applicants are assigned to Eastern Senior High, which had 49 reports of violent incidents (5.4 per 100 students), six robberies involving firearms or knives, and three robberies without firearms. The school also had 38 reports of simple and aggravated assaults (4.1 per 100 students).

Serious crime was not limited to the high schools. Six students at Moten Elementary School applied for Opportunity Scholarships. In 2007–2008, Moten reported 31 violent incidents (11.3 per 100 students), including one homicide and 30 simple and aggravated assaults (10.9 per 100 students).

## WHAT POLICYMAKERS SHOULD DO

The information obtained through this FOIA request to the D.C. Metropolitan Police Department supports previous evidence that school crime and violence are problems for many students in the nation’s capital. Many children are assigned to attend schools where they will likely be exposed to violence and crime. District and federal policymakers should recognize this problem and the importance of improving school safety to ensure that all children have access to a safe learning environment.

To improve the safety of traditional public schools in the District, policymakers could provide accurate and timely information about developments affecting school safety and include this information in school report cards and profiles. D.C. public school authorities should comply with federal law and provide an accessible list of schools that qualify as “persistently dangerous” under No Child Left Behind and D.C. rules and give students the option to transfer to different schools.

Moreover, as more information becomes available about the relative safety of D.C. schools, policymakers, school officials, and the MPD should study the best practices of the safest schools and foster a healthy dialogue to encourage implementation of the most effective strategies for reducing violence and crime throughout the District.

In addition, Congress and D.C. officials should greatly expand school choice options and give more families the power to choose a safe and effective school for their children. For example, Congress and D.C. policymakers should reauthorize and expand the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program. This should include allowing new students to receive scholarships so that more disadvantaged children can attend private schools. Congress and the District government could also enact new scholarship programs to give more students school choice options.

At the same time, the District of Columbia should maintain its strong charter school law, authorizing infrastructure and support for charter schools, and encourage the growth of its safest and most successful charters.

## CONCLUSION

All children should have the opportunity to attend school in a safe learning environment. Regrettably, many students living in the District of Columbia attend schools where they are too often exposed to crime and violence.

The Metropolitan Police Department data presented in this report highlight the problems of violence and crime on the campuses of many D.C. schools. Policymakers in the District should recognize that school safety is an important problem and

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27. Incidents reported as disorderly conduct may indicate violent incidents deemed not serious enough to warrant determinations of assault, or they may indicate more serious offenses for which witness reports yielded incomplete information.

should redouble efforts to reduce crime and violence. In addition, D.C. families should be given the power to choose the best schools for their children so that more children can attend school in a safe learning environment.

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