

Baltimore Teachers Union Announces School Safety Taskforce

Recommendations for Baltimore City Public School Code of Conduct

BALTIMORE – Today, the Baltimore Teachers Union (BTU) hosted a press conference to share the results of their recommendations for Baltimore City Public School’s Code of Conduct developed through the BTU School Safety Taskforce. The Taskforce was established in December 2018 by BTU President Marietta English after a succession of student assaults on Baltimore City Public School educators, school staff and students.

The recommendations are the result of six months of Taskforce meetings where members examined the Code of Conduct and developed new provisions aimed to help provide more protections for educators, school staff and students. In addition to the Code of Conduct, members also developed modules for community-wide training about the Code of Conduct, templates to improve School Culture and Climate for Pre-K through high school, and compiled a comprehensive list of stakeholders and programming that can be implemented on a community-wide level to assist within the school.

Results from the Taskforce meetings come from a community-wide effort of over 60 committed stakeholders. Those individuals include representatives from Baltimore City Public Schools, SchoolPolice, the Mayor’s Office, City Council, State’s Attorney’s Office, Public School Administrators and Supervisors Association of Baltimore City (PSASA), City Union of Baltimore (CUB), the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), Special Education Citizens' Advisory Committee (SECAC), Metro Baltimore AFL-CIO, along with community partners, parent groups, clergy, principals, teachers, PSRPs, school guidance counselors and psychologists, school staff and, most importantly, Baltimore City Public School students.

The following recommendations to the Code of Conduct were announced at a press conference held at the BTU:

A. Attack on a Student:

-Recommendation that the incident be reported as a Level 4 infraction, and that school police be informed so as to diffuse what could potentially become a public safety issue involving the community.

B. Bomb and/or Mass Violence Threat

-Committee recommends notifying school police whenever this type of threat is made regardless of age.

C. Attack on a Student and Bullying, Including Cyberbullying and Gang-related Incidents:

-Recommendation of informing school police in order to prevent a fight from becoming a public safety issue due to the possibility of broader community involvement.

D. Fighting

-Recommendation that school police be informed so as to diffuse what could potentially become a public safety issue involving the community.

E. Physical Contact with School Personnel or Other Adult:

-Recommendation that the consequences begin at a Level 3 and escalate from there rather than beginning at Level 2, which is currently implemented by BCPSS.

F. Sexually-Based Infractions:

-Recommendation that the following be added to the Code of Conduct:

School staff shall:

-Report incidents to the administrator and the administrator shall contact school police

-File a report with CPS

-Refer student to counseling

G. Verbal, Physical or Written Threat to a Student:

-Verbal threats could lead to physical attacks. As a result, the recommendation is that consequences to include Level 4 and informing police in order to prevent broader community involvement.

H. Weapons, Firearms and Explosives

-Recommendation to add language to reflect consequences for detonation and use of an explosive weapon (firecrackers, smoke bombs, flares or any combustible or explosive substance or combination of substances or articles, other than a firearm) in the commissioning of an aggressive act toward another person.

I. School-sponsored activities

-The Committee also recommended that consequence for students involved in incidents affecting the safety or welfare of others at school-sponsored activities (sporting events, prom, school trips) be enforced.

“We are pleased with the work the School Safety Taskforce has done to develop plausible recommendations to improve the Code of Conduct,” said BTU President Marietta English. “It is our hope that the District incorporates them in the 2019-2020 Code of Conduct.”

“The idea BTU President Marietta English had to bring the expertise of school personnel, students, union members, and committed stakeholders from the community together to develop viable solutions for school safety was extremely important because our shared vision is for everyone to work in a safe environment” said Karl Perry, Principal of Edmondson-Westside High School and Vice President of PSASA. “I believe the recommendations, if accepted, will make a positive impact on not only our schools, but the entire city of Baltimore.”

The BTU’s next steps will be to share all of the recommendations with the Education Committee with the City Council and the School Board for implementation.