

DETROIT

More police to patrol school halls in Detroit

During holiday break, officials to seek ways to end violence

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Alita Evans, 17, left, and friend Dainesa Sudduth, 17, both seniors at Finney High in Detroit, wait for a ride home after school on Wednesday. City and district officials said the new security plan is only a temporary fix. (ROMAIN BLANQUART/Detroit Free Press)

Parents and students can expect to see more uniformed officers in the Detroit school district's so-called hot spots as city officials begin mapping out a long-term solution to the violence that has plagued the schools this week, Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick said Wednesday.

The beefed-up security will continue until the district's holiday break, which begins Dec. 21.

During the break, Kilpatrick announced that city and school officials will begin a series of meetings in hopes of solving the problem of school violence.

"This is about our children," Kilpatrick told reporters after a 90-minute meeting with officials from the schools, the Detroit Police Department, the Wayne County Sheriff's Office and the county's child services division.

"We need to deliver confidence to our children -- and to our parents and grandparents -- that the adults in our community will be there, always," Kilpatrick said.

His words came the day after a group of eight to 10 young men attacked Central High School students with pepper spray, then shot a teen in the shoulder.

The day before, two 14-year-old students at Southeastern High School were injured when, police said, 18-year-old Jeremy Banks shot into a crowd. Banks was arraigned Wednesday on nine counts of attempted murder.

Today's boost in the number of uniformed officers at the city's schools will be supplied by the Detroit Police Department. Kilpatrick wouldn't say how many cops would be dedicated to the schools, nor would he pinpoint the district's hot spots, or problem areas.

"We don't want to tell you where we're going to be and when we'll be there," said Kilpatrick, citing security concerns.

It's a plan that should please Emmanuel Ivy, 16, a senior at Finney High on Detroit's east side. He said students know they can misbehave because security guards can't arrest them.

And if students get kicked out, he said, they simply sneak back in.

"We need more cops," Emmanuel said Wednesday.

But Kilpatrick and district Chief Executive Officer William Coleman III acknowledged the new security plan is only a temporary fix to a deep-rooted problem.

"It isn't just security. It isn't just police officers," Coleman said. "It's also about finding the cause of the conflict occurring around our schools."

A controversial proposal was submitted in February to have the Sheriff's Office take over Detroit schools security. Sheriff Warren Evans' plan would involve taking over management of the security operations, providing safer schools at a lower cost by consolidating services.

That proposal won't be addressed until the newly elected school board takes office in January, Kilpatrick said.

Inner-city schools are more likely to acknowledge they have a problem with violence, said Kenneth Trump, president of National School Safety and Security Services, a Cleveland-based consulting firm.

"The public perception is that our urban, inner-city schools are more violent, but the flip side of that is they also have more security measures, a more alert and prepared staff and a better capacity for emergency response," Trump said.

School violence is expected in urban districts, said Carl Taylor, a Michigan State University sociology professor. And it won't stop until the community expects schools to be safe and stops tolerating the young, thug mentality in kids who think they have to be tough to be cool.

"The whole attitude is very aggressive and very reactionary, and the problem is, we've graduated from sticks to guns," he said. "That attitude is more dangerous than the gun."

That attitude seemed apparent at Finney on Wednesday.

In one hour, a student tussled with a security officer who was trying to detain him, a fight broke out in a classroom, students were gambling in the cafeteria, there was talk among staff of a student suspected of having a gun and staff members chased a student who threatened to start a fire.

Last week, the school had 16 fires, some of which staff members suspect were set by outsiders. Detroit schools officials refused to release crime statistics for the district on Wednesday, but incidents are reported daily: A student stabbed another student on the second floor of Henry Ford High last week.

A student who was kicked out of Finney and transferred to Southeastern High is suspected of attacking Southeastern's principal last week.

Patty Worthy drives a van for a group home and said she picks up students at several schools. She said she doesn't see enough security.

"Where are they now?" she said, looking out at the Finney campus Wednesday.

"We need to see teachers more; everybody needs