

“Open Season On DC Teachers”

I’m Monica Brokenborough and I am a nominee for President of the Washington Teachers’ Union and I serve on a Teacher Action Group with EmpowerEd. I recently read a correspondence from the Cincinnati Federation of Teachers titled “Open Season on Teachers”? (*see attached*). The president of the union addressed the board of education on student discipline. This year alone, 25 assaults by students on CPS teachers have been reported at the district’s 63 schools, at both high schools and elementary schools.

I worked in DCPS for two years in Ward 8 at Ballou HS and I’m presently teaching at a Ward 2 elementary school. After working in completely opposite quadrants of our district, I realize that “Open Season On Teachers” is not limited to Cincinnati, OH, but it is highly prevalent in ALL quadrants of DC. Our educators in District of Columbia are continuously assaulted by students in grades PreK-12. What is the most shocking is the fact that the students that commit these heinous crimes suffer little to no consequences.

- An educator was recently struck with a chair and the student was back in class the very next day.
- An educator was sent to the emergency room for treatment following a student assault and was placed on administrative leave and returned to find the student placed back into her class
- An educator was thrown to the ground and punched repeatedly in the face and resigned once she learned that the student was going to remain in her class
- Educators frequently have deductions from their IMPACT that arise from assaults

Although I personally have not experienced an assault by a student, I feel the need to share these stories in which I had first hand knowledge. Our educators are being attacked and no one is standing up for them. The students are well-aware of the fact that they will not suffer any consequences for their actions and take full advantage of the opportunity. DCPS currently endorses “Alternatives to Suspension” and “Restorative Justice” practices. However, these methods are actually contributing to the “School Pipeline to Prison”. Specifically, students are given false security that they can enter the real world and assault someone without suffering any consequence or being provided an opportunity for a “mediation circle talk”. One of my alumni recently contacted me and informed me that she had to serve time in jail for fighting on her college campus. She disclosed to me that she had no idea that she would go to jail for engaging in a fight because she fought all throughout high school and nothing ever happened to her.

stakeholders, we need to ensure that students are prepared for the real world and that our schools are safe for educators. These alternatives to suspension and the non-adherence to the DCMR Student Discipline is having a detrimental effect on our entire educational system.

I am requesting for the State Board of Education to advocate for enforcement of *effective* discipline practices and support revisions to IMPACT that address erroneous deductions. It is time for an immediate stop on “Open Season On Teachers”.

Sincerely,

Monica Brokenborough

Ward 2 Teacher

Washington Teachers’ Union President Nominee



Cincinnati Federation of Teachers

Cincinnati Federation of Office Professionals

Local 1520 | AFT | OFT | AFL-CIO

Julie Sellers addressed the CPS BOE regarding student discipline, last night. Read below.

April 24, 2019

OPEN SEASON ON TEACHERS?

On Thursday evening April 18th, parents of Sands Montessori students received some shocking news from the school's Principal: "A student threw a chair and hit the teacher in the head. The teacher was transported to the emergency room for treatment." The teacher spent time in the hospital and faces what could be a difficult recovery. Understandably, her colleagues at Sands are despondent and concerned for their own safety. Sands' families are wondering how safe their own children are at one of our District's finest schools.

I would like to assure CFT's members and Cincinnati Public Schools' (CPS) parents that this frightening incident was a fluke. Sadly, it's not. This year alone, 25 assaults by students on CPS teachers have been reported at the district's 63 schools, at both high schools and elementary schools. Some examples:

- At one high school a student slammed a teacher's hand in a classroom door, breaking a finger. Lacerations required 20 stitches. The teacher's wedding band had to be cut off because of swelling.
- At another high school a teacher was struck by a student in the cheekbone below the eye as he attempted to separate fighting students.

Surprisingly, many teacher assaults happened at schools serving grades 1-7:

- One student punched and bit a teacher, who suffered a swollen lip, multiple scratches, bruises and swelling.
- A pregnant teacher was shoved in a door by a 4th grader. Who also threatened to bring a gun to school and shoot the teacher and a security guard.
- A third grader slapped a teacher in the face hard enough to leave a mark.
- One student came at a teacher from behind, pulling a chunk of hair out.
- On several occasions one third grader cursed, spit on, hit and kicked and threw furniture and shoes at a teacher.

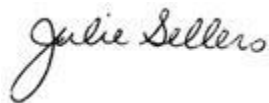
What explains this crisis in safety for our teachers? We've come a long way from the days when teachers wielded paddles to impose order and reign in disruptive students. And for good reason. More violence is not the way to deter student violence. But recent changes in state law, school board policy and the indifference of some school administrators have spawned this "open season" on teachers.

Recently implemented HB 318, passed by the Ohio General Assembly to reduce student suspensions and expulsions, has handcuffed teachers and administrators. Disruptive students *can only be sent home for the day* for anything but the most extreme violations (guns, knives, bombs). State law does allow "in school" suspensions, in an "Alternative Learning Center". But the District and (some of) its Principals have been slow and ineffective to use that remedy effectively to protect teachers and students from disruptive and violent students. Examples:

- Some principals simply return disruptive students back to the classroom after a short trip to the office, making teachers seem powerless and vulnerable.
- Limited space in some crowded CPS buildings means there is no space for a free standing "Alternative Learning Center" where disruptive or violent students can be sent as an alternative to suspension.
- The failure to place sufficient numbers of substitute teachers means that some Alternative Learning Centers must close to staff class rooms when teachers are out sick.
- Some particularly challenging schools do not have enough effective security guards to deter student violence.
- At some schools, security guards are actually assigned to monitor classrooms, taking them from their duties.

These developments have our members asking: what rights do we have to make sure we have a safe working environment? And if we aren't safe, what about our students?

How do we make our schools safe for teachers and students? It will take a reconsideration of state laws, that seem to prioritize protecting violent students rather than their teachers. It will take a School Board and administrators committed to providing adequate staff and facilities to deal with disruptive and violent students, including the mental health care services that some students need. It will take parents who reinforce the message that targeting teachers will have consequences.



Julie Sellers

CFT President