

# THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA

440 N. BROAD STREET, SUITE 301  
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19130

ARLENE C. ACKERMAN  
SUPERINTENDENT

October 15, 2008

Dear Parents and/or Guardians,

I would first like to thank everyone in The Philadelphia School District community for the overwhelmingly supportive and positive reception I have been given. When I arrived in Philadelphia only a few short months ago, I knew that the “stars were aligned” and a number of the right pieces were in place. In meeting with many of you, I truly believe that, as a Philadelphia community, we have the opportunity to create meaningful improvement in the lives of our children.

Since one of my core beliefs is “It takes the entire community to ensure the success of its public schools,” I invite you to help us in creating a long-term plan to guide our work in raising the level of achievement for all students while working to eliminate differences based on where you live or where your child goes to school. Over the next few weeks and months, we will be beginning a series of community meetings throughout the District to get your suggestions to help us in creating a Strategic Plan to guide our work over the next six years. We will be sending out more information through our schools and community partners as we finalize plans for these community meetings.

As Superintendent, one of my most important goals is to support our students in schools and classrooms that are safe for learning. When my two sons were in public schools, their academic progress, health, safety, and welfare were my chief concerns. In our District, what I wanted for my own children, I will demand for your children.

In an effort to create a safe learning environment in schools, I am reminding students of the District’s “**zero tolerance**” policy towards violence of any kind in their school, on the property of their school, or during any school sanctioned activity.

**Effective immediately, school administrators are required to suspend a student or group of students for 10 days with intent to expel when there is reasonable and probable grounds to believe that a student or group of students has:**

- **Assaulted an adult or another student**
- **Committed or incited an act of violence**
- **Possessed or has transported onto school property materials to utilize as potential weapons**

**If a student commits offenses in any of the aforementioned categories he/she will neither remain at his/her present school nor will be transferred to another District school. Instead, I will recom-**

**mend that your student be immediately enrolled in an alternative school placement and, pending the result of an expulsion hearing by the School Reform Commission, will not be allowed to return to a District school for a minimum of one year. Expulsions may be permanent.**

As parents, we all know that we are the primary influence on our children. I ask you to talk to your children about the new policy that we are adopting toward violence of any kind in our schools. Remember that you are your son or daughter's first and most important teacher.

Please refer to the District Code of Conduct as it outlines the District's safety practices and protocols with our law enforcement partners in a clear and organized way. Please contact your child's principal or guidance counselor if you need to get a copy of the Code of Conduct.

If your child thinks that a potentially violent incident may occur or that he/she may become victims themselves, here are some steps we need you to follow **immediately**:

1. Contact your school's principal and tell him/her the pertinent information
2. Report the situation to the District's Safety Police at 215-400-6000
3. Call the District's Safety Hotline at 215-400-7233

I remain committed to providing your children with a safe and engaging learning environment just as I would want for my own.

Thank you.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Arlene C. Ackerman', written in dark ink.

Arlene C. Ackerman, Ed.D.