

IN OUR SCHOOLS
OUR CHILDREN:
Armed and Dangerous?

Two School Board Members Say Metal Detectors an Option

By KAREN M. HANNON and MARK R. MOSS
Chronicle Staff Writers

If gun-related incidents continue to increase in the schools, officials should look at installing metal detectors, two members of the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Board of Education said.

However, other board members suggested that such measures may send students the wrong message, and that more creative approaches are needed to resolving student disputes so they won't reach the point where a weapon is viewed as the solution.

"I don't think we need metal detectors yet, and I hope it doesn't get to that point," Nancy I. Griffith said. "It would be an enormous task and expense to try to cover all the doors on school campuses. But if it got to that point, the board would at least look into it."

Grace C. Efir, another board member, said she would not be opposed to the measure if the situation gets worse.

"If the need becomes that severe, I'm personally in favor of using anything that will reduce the likelihood of someone being hurt or killed," Efir said. "I know that

costs money, and I hope it would not have to come to that. But if the measure would prevent any further instances, I certainly would go along with whatever it takes."

Over the past few days, several board members, in separate interviews, talked about ways to stem the tide of increased school violence.

Board member Nancy Wooten said she has received calls from parents whose child has been expelled from school because of violating the weapons policy. She said they wanted her to intercede and get the child re-instated.

"They all say the policy is too strict," Wooten said. "But this is a zero tolerance rule and I think it's an appropriate policy. The child knows that you shouldn't do it."

A. C. Larrimore, director of auxiliary services for the school system, said each of the high schools have hand-held metal detectors. Griffith and Efir were speaking of metal detectors that are placed in doorways.

What's needed more than metal detectors, Wooten said, is doing a better job in offering ways to solve disputes.

"The schools do not crack down hard enough or soon enough on disputes," she said. She believes that



Geneva Brown

the schools need to involve more adult mediators in student disputes to, in effect, nip confrontations in the bud.

Board members echoed another common theme in addressing the problem: a possible solution begins at home.

"It's broader than kids bringing weapons to school," Efir said. "It's a societal problem. We need to look at where they get the guns, who owns the guns and where they're kept."

"In all likelihood, they get the guns from their own homes," she said.

Efir said more emphasis



Mary P. Wood

should be put on talking with the parents and training them on the dangers of having weapons at home within easy reach of their children.

"We all agree that we cannot tolerate (weapons) in our schools," Efir said. "We cannot afford to let our children be fearful of attending school and our parents be fearful of their children attending school."

Griffith said that of the incidents involving guns in schools that she knows of, students brought them from home.

"At some point, the guardians of these children need to be held accountable," Griffith said. "Part of being an adult is being responsible



Grace Efir

for what's in your home."

Board member Geneva B. Brown agrees that parents need to become more responsible.

"Parents need to become a little more accountable for the things their kids go through," she said.

Board member Mary Wood said parents should keep closer tabs on their children.

"A large number of our students aren't supervised as much as they used to be," she said. "Most of the time, parents don't even know their



Nancy Griffith

kids are carrying guns."

Board members said they have discussed the issue in private and at board meetings.

"Every board member wants to ensure as much as possible that the schools are a safe place for students and teachers," Griffith said. "The message that the board is trying to send out is if you bring a gun on campus, you're gone. It's as simple as that."

Teacher Charged with Possessing Cocaine

By MARK R. MOSS
Chronicle Staff Writer

A band director at South Park High School has been suspended with pay after being arrested last week and charged with possession of cocaine.

James Funches, 49, of 1464 Brookwood Drive, was arrested on March 31 around 6 p.m. in the 500 block of Goler Court, Winston-Salem Police Lt. F. W. Jones said. Officers were on foot patrol in the area because of it is known for drug dealing, Jones said.

Funches was approached by one of the three officers on patrol and consented to being searched, Jones

said. The officers found cocaine and a crack pipe with crack in it, he said.

Funches was charged with possession of cocaine and possession of drug paraphernalia. He was released without bail with an April 23 date in Forsyth County Court.

Douglas Pungler, Forsyth schools attorney, said schools superintendent Larry D. Coble doesn't have to wait for the outcome of the legal process to decide Funches' professional fate. He has up to 90 days to conduct an investigation, Pungler said. "Because certain acts of misconduct might be viewed as so wrongful, the superintendent might not take that prior record into con-

sideration," Pungler said.

Funches taught band for two periods at South Park, then went to Paisley Middle School where he also taught. "I really don't know what to say and what not to say," said Sam Puryear, Sr., the South Park principal. "I was really surprised."

Puryear said Funches wasn't at his school long enough during the day for them to get to know each other well. He hadn't noticed any work-related problems, and there was nothing about his work habits, Puryear said. "that would send me a signal," he said. "It's a sad situation," he said. "I hate to see a black man go down



James Funches

like that." Tom Bohlinger, the principal at Paisley, refused to comment.

Students Held In Room

most of the high schools and middle schools, but have been made obsolete in most schools. Alderman Larry Womble reacted first with surprise then anger when told that the practice of holding students in a padded room still existed.

"If you get to a point that a student needs to be locked in a room, for any reason, that student needs to be placed in a professional treatment facility," he said.

Womble, an assistant principal at Paisley Middle School, said school counselors are not equipped to administer the type of counseling these students require. School counselors mostly are equipped to deal with academic counseling, he said.

Elsa Woods, director of Forsyth middle schools, agreed that some of the students at Petree might belong in a treatment facility, but she added that the school system must first afford that child every chance to succeed there. Woods said school officials sometimes "bend over backwards" in giving a child that chance.

"But sometimes you can't

because getting an education is not (the child's) priority," she said.

She said institutionalizing a student is something that is done only after extremely careful consideration.

"Putting a label on a child or putting a child out of school is not something you do lightly," Woods said in an interview. "Once you send a child to an institution or put them out of school, that's something they wear for a lifetime."

She said that for marginal calls, Petree has implemented a day-treatment program.

Larry W. Holland, the assistant principal at Petree Middle School, said students there are placed in the "timeout room" when they become abusive or exhibit threatening behavior toward a teacher or any other school official. He said the room is "very rarely used."

"The mission of Petree is to deal with students with behavioral problems," he said. "Sometimes a pretty good percentage of students are connected with the judicial system, and are on probation. We try to provide a

facility for them to come and we tend to be a bit more tolerant."

Petree, an alternative school located on Old Greensboro Road in the eastern quadrant of the city, has about 140 students and 10 administrators. Most of Petree's students have been removed from mainstream schools and a number of them are behaviorally emotionally handicapped, Holland said.

S. Reed Jarvis, the county's deputy fire marshal, said that because the room is not mechanically locked with a key, it does not violate county fire codes. He said the lock is a "rolling block" type of lock that suspends when pressure is removed. He likened it to the type of lock found on barns or horse stables.

"There is not a mechanical lock on the door — this is something we were very careful to make sure the room did not have," Jarvis said. "If something happens and the teacher has to leave, the door automatically opens because the lock is hand-held. There is no way anyone can be mechanically locked in the room."

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Schools attorney Douglas Pungler said the timeout room is a strategy designed to calm an emotional student who may momentarily be dangerous to himself and others.

"The theory behind it is that when students become agitated or upset, it gives them a period of timeout separate from other students," Pungler said. "It can be a worthwhile behavior modification program. When used properly, it is one of the measures that can be used to allow a student to remain in school without becoming suspended or excluded."

But that does not satisfy Womble.

"The school system," he said, "is of the notion that it can treat any child no matter what the extreme situation might be." It then tries to implement programs to address students who have a special problem, he said.

"There may come a time that the school system can't be all things to all people," he added.

Guns, Violence from page A1

"The availability of weapons is one reason why young people have weapons on campus," Puryear said. "It would not be a problem for me to go in many of these students' homes and find a weapon for a kid to use."

There are two other factors that concern school administrators and law-enforcement officials, as well: Offenders are getting younger and the violent confrontations are no longer confined to student against student. Last week, a 12-year-old female student at Hanes Middle School was charged with assault on a law-enforcement officer after fighting with a school liaison officer. During the 1991-92 school year, there were 15 instances

where students assaulted faculty members in Forsyth schools, according to a report released last week by the state Department of Public Instruction. The report coincides with the work of a task force on school safety set up by Gov. Jim Hunt. The task force will recommend solutions next week, said Kay Williams, chief consultant of communications at the Department of Public Instruction. Students caught with weapons at school currently face long-term suspension with recommendation for expulsion. Said Puryear: "You want kids in school, and kids have a right to an education. Yet, you can't have them in school having weapons, too."

Board

Bolton said he is currently paying \$205 a month to the woman.

The Citizens Review Board is being formed to hear complaints filed against the police department. The board will investigate those complaints and report the results to the city manager.

Four of the nominees are African Americans: Tonja C. Adams; Deborah T. Daniels; and Alfred Harvey.

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Clyde T. Cutler, a counselor at the Samaritan Inn, withdrew his name. Wood nominated Richard W. Gray Jr. as his replacement.

The other nominees are Beatrice L. Ackenbom-Kelly; Linda H. Gilbert; Thomas H. Lowe; Robert B. Rasco; Robert R. Sowers; and Thomas E. Styers Jr.

This week, the Board of Aldermen voted not to act on the nominations. The board will discuss it again at its April 19 meeting.

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Place: Knollwood Baptist Church Fellowship Hall 330 Knollwood Street
For: Women ages 35-55 and anyone who wishes to learn more about menopause.

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