

Minorities represent highest suspension numbers

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of punishment, such as detention and community service, may also deter misbehavior.

Principal Rose Stowe said that she faces a different dilemma at Hall-Woodward Elementary. The school now has a large and growing Hispanic population due to the implementation of an English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) theme, and a number of the immigrant students come to Hall-Woodward without immunization shots. Parents have 30 days from the time of enrollment to immunize their children, or the students are automatically suspended.

Those numbers, almost half of the suspensions, are factored into the total. "They need to be separated so we can get a true picture," Stowe said. The number of suspensions for fighting drops off by high

school, though, said Carver principal Daniel Piggott. Instead, behavior that may be termed "disruptive" but is not necessarily physical accounts for more of the high school suspensions. "We have a serious problem with excessive tardies," but few violent incidents, he said.

"It's not the kind of situation where it is unsafe, like you might turn the corner and get hit with a brick," said Piggott of Carver's high suspension numbers, the second highest at that level.

Like Diggs', Carver's suspensions are usually handed out to the same youths over and over. The same students will fall into a pattern of repeat offenses, and often end up at alternative schools such as Independence High School. Suspensions remain high even at schools set up for students with disciplinary problems;

Independence leads in out-of-school dismissals.

Causes for the high number of suspension have been debated. One concern raised is the demographic ratio of teachers to students, with white females comprising 63 percent of the teaching and counseling staff in Winston-Salem/Forsyth County schools. Only 4 percent of the staff in those positions are black males.

Piggott doesn't believe cultural biases are at the root of the suspension problem. "If you follow those kids to the home, you find they are in trouble there," he said.

Parental involvement at school can help out, but it's not a cure-all, warns Piggott. "If a parent does not have control of their kids at home, they will not have a lot of effect in their involvement at school."

Diggs' Robinson took a more philosophical stance on suspensions. "People say schools ain't what they used to be. Schools are a reflection of society — society ain't what it used to be," she stated. Even elementary school children are no longer immune from the problems of violence and social decay, Robinson added.

"Some of them are angry,"

she said. "They're not angry at the kid they're hitting, they're angry about life."

Nonetheless, she doesn't allow students to "cop out" and blame others for their prob-

lems. "By the time they get to grade three, they know the educational process," said Robinson. "We're trying to teach them responsibility for their actions."

Grievance panel denies

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grievance committee, which included board members Jane Goins and Buddy Collins.

Brown disagreed with Bagley. "I feel if a parent doesn't have a standing on behalf of a child ... I don't know if anyone has a standing," said Brown.

Parents charged that Schoderbek went against Superintendent Don Martin's instructions to stay away from school grounds and avoid contact with students. Martin instructed Schoderbek to remain away from the school and its students. During this period, he was allowed to administer SAT and ACT tests during his suspension to students, including at least one who had filed a complaint with school administration.

Bagley said that though the parents went through the correct grievance channels, they could not address the superintendent's decision. Since the board could only reject and not reverse the superintendent's decision, the appeal would not be in good standing unless there was evidence that Schoderbek had harassed students since his return to Parkland March 10.

"I don't think they have any recourse," said Bagley.

Brown said that he and the other parents are reviewing options and have not yet decided if they will take further action.

Although the parents didn't accomplish what they had hoped to, said Brown, he is proud of

the parents for their support and participation. "One of the positive things that has come out of this," he said, "is that they stood up for their kids."

Local charter schools get

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teacher ratio of 16 to one. Applications to Lift will be accepted through May 2.

The location for the Carter G. Woodson School of Challenge building will be announced within two weeks, said board member H.B. Harris. Applications will be accepted at least through May, said Harris, but the deadline may be extended. The school's initial program is designed for 200 students in grades one through eight, but the charter plans to eventually serve grades K-12.

The Carter G. Woodson school's program takes lead from its namesake, the African-American historian and scholar who created Black History Month, said Harris. "We are looking for that group that has been categorized as 'at risk,'" said Harris, students whose performance in public schools does not match their abilities.

"One of the things we want to stay away from is labels," Harris added.

Forsyth County still has an opening for one more charter. Each county is limited to five charters per local school system.

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