

## Press Statement

Edward H. Brown Jr., President, Board of Education  
Thursday, February 23, 2006

### Re: Superintendent's Safe Schools Initiatives

The Board of Education is fully engaged and absolutely committed to ensuring a safe learning environment for the students we serve. We are further committed to the provision of an excellent education. The steps that the Superintendent has just outlined, are in keeping with these objectives.

Last night, we met with her in executive session and we are **fully supportive of the bold and innovative direction** in which she is moving. Furthermore, it is our intention to formally adopt her plan, at our next public Board Meeting.

We are also calling on the district's professional staff, on the frontline of the educational process, as well as the student body itself, to live up to their responsibilities to provide order and academic excellence in the learning environment. And we have very high expectations that they will.



ALBANY

# A push for safer schools

## Wide-ranging plan aims to cut violence, improve discipline

BY ELI FANNING  
Gazette Reporter

Albany High School students will find some changes when they return to classes on Monday.

The wide-ranging new plans are aimed at reducing school violence and improving discipline, Albany City School District Superintendent Eva Joseph said Thursday.

They include newly uniformed school hall monitors who will strictly enforce the dress code, and security officers who will

make more random weapons searches.

"The [students] who have caused safety problems have tarnished the image of the school district and that of the city and made too many of the teachers and support staff question their personal safety. This must stop," Joseph said.

A group of three administrators, including Assistant Superintendent Joseph Gragone, will be shifted to the high school temporarily to bolster discipline. Gragone will aid Principal Michael Cioffi and

act like "a new general," said Board of Education President Ed Brown.

The goal is for school staff to deliver a consistent discipline, Joseph said. That means that if a student is wearing inappropriate head gear such as a colored bandana, he or she is told by all staff to take it off, Joseph said.

A third 25-minute lunch period will be added to reduce the student lunch crowd from 1,200 to 800. This is designed to reduce

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MEREDITH L. KAISER/GAZETTE PHOTOGRAPHER

Eva Joseph, superintendent of the Albany City School District, speaks about safety issues at a news conference in Albany on Thursday. Board of Education President Ed Brown is at right.

## School

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the volume of foot traffic and make hallways more manageable, Joseph said.

The high school may also open new satellite classrooms on the University at Albany campus that would serve about 20 students and two teachers, Joseph said.

The classrooms would house poorly performing students who may be inspired to work harder in a college environment, Joseph said.

The range of new initiatives is "intended to jump-start a comprehensive plan to tackle the safety challenges," Joseph said.

The school of roughly 2,225 students was the scene of a string of fights and vio-

lent incidents leading up to the February vacation week and was the scene of a large brawl in November.

The incidents led to several arrests and an intensified public focus on violence at the urban school district.

There will not be an increased police presence at the school, which Joseph said now has two or three officers in the school.

The plans to curb school violence were endorsed by the Board of Education. Joseph met the board in a closed-door meeting prior to the Thursday announcement.

"We are also calling on the district's professional staff, who are the front lines of the educational process, and the student body to live up to their responsibilities," Brown said. "There is going to be a sense that something is different."

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