

## Handcuffs

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“There is more chronic and extreme disrespect, disinterest and kids who basically don’t care,” Bernstein said.

Experts and educators point to a number of factors that lead to the arrests: Some officers are operating without special training. School administrators are desperate to get the attention of uninvolved parents. And overwhelmed teachers are unaware that calling in the police to defuse a situation could lead to serious criminal charges.

### Several years ago officers arrested a kindergartner who threw a tantrum during a jelly bean-counting contest

“I have had some concern for a while that the schools have relied a little too heavily on police officers to handle disciplinary problems,” said Darrel Stephens, a former Charlotte, N.C., police chief and executive director of the Major Cities Chiefs Association.

There is little national data to back those assertions; no numbers are tracked nationally on how often police are called in to arrest students. Whether the children are actually charged and saddled with criminal records varies by case and jurisdiction. Some youngsters are charged with felonies. Some are freed without further incident. Others receive tickets.

In Milledgeville, Ga., a city of 18,000 some 90 miles from Atlanta, Salecia Johnson was accused of tearing items off the walls and throwing books and toys in an outburst Friday at Creekside Elementary. Police said she also threw a small shelf that

struck the principal in the leg, and jumped on a paper shredder and tried to break a glass frame.

Police didn’t say what set off the tantrum. Baldwin County (Ga.) schools Superintendent Geneva Braziel called the student’s behavior “violent and disruptive” and said the police were needed to keep the student, other classmates and the school staff safe.

Salecia was handcuffed and taken away in a patrol car to the police station, where she was taken to a squad room and given a soda, police said. She won’t be charged with a crime.

In Florida, the use of police in schools came up several years ago when officers arrested a kindergartner who threw a tantrum during a jelly bean-counting contest. A bill was proposed this year to restrict police from arresting kids for misde-

meanors or other acts that do not pose serious safety threats.

In Connecticut, court officials began tracking student arrests after becoming concerned about referrals for minor offenses. Since last March, nearly 1,700 students were arrested, almost two-thirds of them for breach of peace, minor fights and disorderly conduct.

In Texas, a December report from the nonprofit Texas Appleseed, a public interest group, says more than 275,000 non-traffic tickets are issued to juveniles each year. While it is unclear how many are written at school, the group says the vast majority are for offenses most commonly linked to incidents like disrupting the class and disorderly conduct.

Texas Sen. John Whitmire said educators and police need to better distinguish between who they are afraid of and who they are mad at.

## Grand Slam



PHOTO BY SUSAN FRIED

Vicious Puppies does some break dancing during a break at the 2012 Youth Speaks Poetry Grand Slam Friday, April 13, at the Neptune Theatre.

“If you are afraid of someone because they bring a gun or drugs, of course we come down hard,” Whitmire said. “It’s the kids that just make you mad that you don’t need to make a crime.”

In Albuquerque, which started tracking arrests after noticing more minor cases coming from schools, more than 900 of the district’s 90,000 students were referred to the criminal justice system in the 2009-2010 school year. Of those, more than 500 were handcuffed, arrested and brought to juvenile detention, officials said. More than 200 were arrested for minor offenses, including disorderly conduct, resisting arrest, refusing to obey and interference with staff.

Preliminary numbers indicate arrests have

fallen 53 percent since the class-action lawsuit was filed in 2010, prompting law enforcement officials to order more caution.

Albuquerque school officials have declined comment on school arrests, citing the pending litigation.

But juvenile advocates and parents say first arrests could lead to more trouble.

Annette Montano says her 13-year-old son was arrested at a middle school for burping in gym class. The tension between him and school officials led to several more run-ins, she said, including a strip search after he was accused of selling drugs.

Read the rest of this story online at [www.theskanner.com](http://www.theskanner.com)



## Schools

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the Tubman school’s closure on the local economy – because it is an all-girls school focusing on math and science, the three officials said it is crucial in maintaining the kind of local workforce that will draw companies to the area.

### Reaching Out

Portland City Commissioner candidate Teressa Raiford brought a contingent of the Tubman girls and their families to the City Hall reception for newly hired Office of Equity and Human Rights Director Dante James on Friday, April 6.

“I thought if they are in a leadership academy they should test out their leadership right here,” Raiford told The Skanner News. “We started out with the idea at 8 o’clock this morning and now it’s – what? – 4:30? That’s not bad,” Raiford said, surveying the City Hall atrium where small groups of girls dressed in deep purple surrounded elected officials, bureau chiefs and other VIPs.

“Well I think that as a school it has a lot of potential and I believe that the school district should let it stay for a few more years to see how it expands, and how the students improve,” said senior Meda Pulla.

“By going to the school in the beginning I never thought about going into engineering, but then after going to the school and taking some engineering classes I found out that I really like engineering and I want to be an engineer,” said her twin sister Ansallah.

“I’m a senior and so now I’m going next year to PSU, and also in the academy I managed to get a scholarship to go to PSU, a \$3,000 renewable scholarship,” Ansallah said. “So it’s really helped me a lot and I hope it can stay open so it can help other

girls too.”

Seventh grader Leah Montgomery shared an even more personal side to how the closure will impact her life.

“Well I think it is very sad that we’re having our school close down because the school has changed me in so many different ways that it gave me the education I needed,” she told The Skanner News.

“When I came to school I was at a fourth grade math level, and when I moved into seventh grade I was upgraded to a fifth grade level,” she said.

### ‘This school is about creating leaders one girl at a time and I’ve been in the leadership class and the championships, and I just wish this school could have one last chance’

“I progressed as fast as I could and I had so many different tutors, and they helped me with all my emotional problems,” Montgomery said.

“I had counseling and at the NAYA Center I got into sports,” she said. “This school is about creating leaders one girl at a time and I’ve been in the leadership class and the championships, and I just wish this school could have one last chance.”

It remains unclear whether James, the city’s new Equity director, or Chief of Police Mike Reese, or state Rep. Lew Frederick, or any of the multitude of others at the Friday reception will be able to sway the school board’s vote on Tubman’s closure.

James, however, was impressed by the girls’ showing.

“Well they are making themselves heard,” he said.

### One Mom’s Story

Jyothi Pulla, Meda and Ansallah’s mother, is livid about not just the closure, but the way it has been unveiled. Even though her daughters graduate out of the school at the end of the year, she has worked overtime to raise awareness of the unfairness of the district’s proposed cuts.

Pulla says there are three reasons for Tubman’s low enrollment.

“One, people don’t know that it exists; second thing is the people who know and believe in the school and who put our kids there are told every year that this is a failing school and it’s going to close,” Pulla said. “Our scores are linked with Jefferson scores, and because it’s a Title I school we get this letter annually – ‘Does not meet AYP standards.’ I am a new parent, and I didn’t know that every other high school does not meet AYP standards, but they don’t get letters home because they’re not Title I schools.

“So what can it do to a parent when you see a letter sent from the district saying ‘this school is not meeting AYP standards, transfer your child out’? That’s the second thing. “The third thing is, in the five years of our existence – less than five years – we’ve been told that we might close, like, three times. Which parent would put their kids in a school with an uncertain future? “So the ones who are there are leaving because we don’t know if it’s going to stay; the ones who could come are not coming because they don’t know if the school will stay.

“In spite of that, in spite of that, we have 220 kids,” Pulla says.

“So I think it’s up to the community to step up and take ownership,” she said. “If the community really sees the potential and enrolls the girls in the school and increases the numbers, the potential is enormous. I really think it’s enormous.”

“The criticism has been that it’s a small school – the enrollment numbers are low, but what people don’t know is why our numbers have been low,” she said. “A lot of people don’t know that this school exists as an all-girl school, there is very little awareness in this city about the existence of this school. The people know it as a middle school, maybe,” she said. “There’s one ex-principal of Tubman, he was here at Tubman for 15 years, Mr. Coakley, he didn’t even know this had been turned into an all-girls school until two months ago. So can you imagine? So if people don’t know that we exist, how can we get the word out?”