



Arsenal Tech High School Fight – The Community Was Right

By Shawnta S. Barnes -August 19, 2018

I attended and wrote about several of the community meetings where Indianapolis Public Schools was seeking input from the community about moving from seven high school campuses to four. One comment I heard at most meetings was about concerns of fights and violence breaking out during the 2018-19 school year. Under IPS high school choice model, which began this school year, students chose their high school based on the academies offered that aligned with their interests. Many community

members believed students from various IPS neighborhoods would not be able to co-exist and there would be fights.

Unfortunately, less than two weeks into the new school year, the prediction came true. On Thursday, August 16, a fight that began inside the cafeteria spilled outside onto Arsenal Tech's large campus. There were various reports with contradicting numbers of how many students were involved, but many reports said hundreds. According to a statement released by IPS:

Eight students suffered minor injuries. Most were treated on the scene, but three were transported to the hospital for further attention. One student hyperventilated, a second student had a hand injury and a third student injured their ankle.

Thirteen students were arrested and charged with disorderly conduct.

As reported by RTV6, student Tamia Murray was suspended for three days for filming the fight and Indy Star reported many students were sprayed with pepper spray and parents had difficulty picking up their children after the incident due to communication issues with the school.

Where does IPS go from here? Yes, the district put in extra security measures after the incident, but will that be enough? As a person, who experienced pepper spray in my eyes and throat last year while working in an IPS high school, I can tell you that it is not easy to go back to business as normal. Even when it did get back to 'normal,' it made me wonder if I would get caught up in pepper spray again by just doing my job.

This incident was bad press IPS does not need especially when the district is trying to convince the community to vote for the upcoming referendum. This situation makes me wonder if other community members' concerns will come true. Maybe it is time to review those community comments again and be more proactive instead of reactive in the future.