

"I think [these cuts] are appalling ... the same way we can find money to buy out an underperforming superintendent, you can find the same money to fulfill the promise of a better future for our children."

But is it possible for the district to balance its books without encumbering the learning and social enrichment of its students? Probably not without some help - but Lassiter has an idea.

"I think we need to have our civic, philanthropic, business and sports communities intersect with one another to find the money to keep these valuable programs going in an era when young people need these quality programs the most," Lassiter said. "There's no time for excuses; it's time to leverage professional relationships to put up the money to continue to foster hope."

Sidebar

Veronica Joyner in the lobby of Mathematics, Civics and Science Charter school.

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**Feb 10, 2012**

**Philadelphia Tribune**

"Parents decry school safety cuts"

Damon Williams

Cuts to public school programming, a shortage of nurses and the recent dismissal of more than 90 security personnel equal the last straw for Parents United For Better Schools and its president and founder, Veronica Joyner.

"We are concerned with the drastic cuts by the district to bridge its budgeting gap," Joyner said during a press conference Tuesday outside School District of Philadelphia headquarters on North Broad Street. "This is a very sad day, and parents need to be outraged. Our children's safety is at stake."

Fellow education advocate Dr. **Walter D. Palmer**, founder of the **Walter D. Palmer** Leadership Learning Partners Charter School, joined Joyner at the podium.

District spokesman Fernando Gallard recently announced that 91 per them members of the security force were laid off; 82 were notified and dismissed last week, while the remaining nine positions will be terminated at the end of the school year.

"We are trying to meet a budget gap, which leaves little of what we can do to improvise savings in a very short period of time," Gallard said. "We still have 386 sworn officers, and that, in combination with rolling units that will visit schools that do not have a [stationary] officer, will be sufficient, we believe.

"These are very difficult choices, and choices we don't want to make."

Joyner, who is also the founder and chief administration officer for The Mathematics, Civics and Sciences Charter School, is most concerned about the security of both students and teachers alike, and points to the number of incidents - reported or not - as proof that the district needs to do more in securing said safety.

"There are 6,000 reported incidents [in public schools] every day," Joyner said, noting that there were an untold number of grave incidents that went unreported. "A teacher at Frankford was attacked twice by students. Soon, with these cuts, schools will be out of control, and I am concerned that we may have to report a death" if something isn't done.

Joyner, for her part, also sent a letter to Chief Inspector Myron Paterson, who oversees the security detail for the district. In it, she referenced the Blue Ribbon Commission On Safe Schools report, which found that "there is no more important issue to parents, students and staff than school safety. In the hierarchy of needs, it understandably outranks academic performance because without safety, fear increases, parent confidence is eroded, and teaching and learning are undermined ... the School District of Philadelphia cannot suspend or expel its way out of the problem of school violence."

The report also found that on any given day, 25 students, teachers and staff members were assaulted in each school, that the district fails to consistently reports these incidents and the district doesn't provide adequate counseling for victims.

**Palmer**, who has been involved with education for almost half a century, believes the district is looking to make cuts in the wrong places in order to save itself.

"Instead of the human cuts, look at the property cuts," Palmer said. "The school district has 264 schools, and have millions tied up in [obsolete] buildings."

Palmer has pitched his idea that the district should spin off its most dangerous and unproductive schools into independent, community-based charter schools. Doing that, Palmer said, would lead to better neighborhood ownership of the education neighborhood kids receive, and will also free up much-needed dollars for the district.

"The district needs a whole change in attitude," Palmer said. "Charters could help the public schools. They are trying to save the bureaucracy and structure [of the school district], but you cannot keep cutting personnel, because you will end up cutting the culture of safety."

Sidebar

Dr. Walter D. Palmer speaking at Parents United For Better Schools press conference.

Sidebar

Veronica Joyner talks to reporters at Parents United For Better Schools press conference. - ABDUL R SULAYMAN/PHILADELPHIA TRIBUNE CHIEF PHOTOGRAPHER

Veronica Joyner and Dr. Walter D. Palmer read statements to reporters during the Parents United For Better Schools press conference.

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**May 1, 2012**  
**Philadelphia Tribune**

"An all-out assault"  
Damon Williams

**Headnote**

**Charter school leaders vow to fight plans attacking per-pupil funding or forcing adoption of an enrollment cap**

**Barely a week has passed since the School Reform Commission publicized its controversial, "Blueprint for Transforming Philadelphia's Public Schools," and charter school leaders are**