

A fire drill, then fisticuffs

Police called to calm East High School

MEAGHAN M. MCDERMOTT

@MEAGMC

In the aftermath of an apparent fight at East High School on Thursday that led to an overwhelming police response, lockdown and at least one person taken away in an ambulance, a clear theme emerged from frustrated parents converging on the school to pick up their children: inadequate communication.

"Parents wouldn't have known about this if a kid hadn't posted it on Facebook," said Daniel Sneddon, waiting outside the school for the lockdown to lift so he could pick up his grandson. "I think that's poor communication with parents. All the parents should be notified." Students said the incident sparked during a fire drill around noon when a few girls began fighting and chaos ensued. "We came out and maybe two minutes later, there was a fight and the police came and started spraying-pepper and this girl started hitting a teacher because she was holding her back," said Jos Camacho Jr., a tenthgrader. "There were maybe three fights at a time. It was crazy." He said the school should have more security, especially during the last few days of school.

And, he said, the district should remove students who make trouble.

"They should just kick them out," he said. "If they come to school to fight, there's no point. What do you come to school for? You come to school to study and to have a future, not to fight, you know?" Dozens of police officers were at the school following the fight, and at least three students were taken to police cars in handcuffs. Those students were later uncuffed and released from the cars. At least one person was taken from the school in an ambulance. In a written statement, City School District spokesman Chip Partner said the incident started with an altercation in the building that was quickly addressed by staff. Then, one of the students involved in that altercation pulled a fire alarm, which emptied the building.

From there, multiple students became involved in fighting outside, he said.

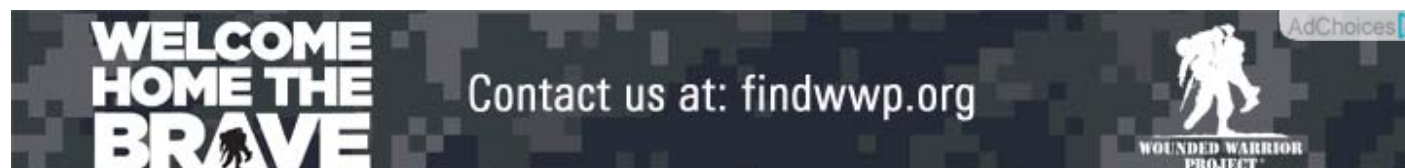
"School safety staff and faculty intervened immediately and called police for assistance. There were no serious injuries and no weapons involved," he said. "Students returned to school and were dismissed at the normal time. Families were notified via Robo Call and appropriate disciplinary action is being taken against students involved in the fighting."

At the scene, parent Maritza Cabrera said the district was too slow in getting out good information.

"In the city, the school goes into a lockdown and I find out through Facebook and text messages that my daughter is in a bad situation?" she said around 1:15 p.m., outside the school. "If this was a suburban school, we would have gotten robocalls by now letting us know what was going on, when the lockdown was going to end and when we could pick up our children."

Cabrera said she can't wait until next year when University of Rochester takes over leadership of East High. "You send your kids to school to be safe and get an education, at this point they get neither," she said. Karen Fox said she got a notification from the district by phone at 1:46 p.m. Still, Fox said, she wasn't ready to condemn the district for its response.

"I don't know how they could really handle it any differently," she said. "It was unexpected. You can't predict these things unless you see that kids are planning something on social media."





A student is taken to a waiting ambulance after a large fight broke out at East High School during a fire alarm.

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JosCamacho takes home his son, JosCamacho Jr., and daughter, Millialys Camacho, after a large fight broke out at East High School during a fire alarm.

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A student is released from custody after a large fight broke out at East High School during a fire alarm.

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