

GANGS ' TOUGH TALK TURNS DEADLY

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photographer GABRIEL B. TAIT contributed

Gang violence and security measures that failed to keep a weapon out of school were the volatile cocktail that led to Tuesday's fatal stabbing of a 16-year-old Denby High School sophomore.

"It just brought tears to my eyes. It was during regular classes and the next thing you know he was lying there bleeding and you could see the stab wound," said a Denby student who asked not to be identified for fear of **gang** retaliation.

Demetrius Anderson was stabbed once in the upper left chest in the second-floor hallway of the Detroit high school about noon Tuesday. He was pronounced dead at St. John Hospital.

Ralph Williams, 15, of the 13000 block of Hampshire, was taken into custody moments after the stabbing, police said. He was held in the Wayne County Youth Home pending formal charges today.

Williams, whom police expect to charge as an adult, apparently had eluded four functioning metal detectors in the east side school and smuggled in a six-inch steak knife.

Tuesday's attack was the second time in a week that a security breach contributed to a bloody incident inside a Detroit public high school. Williams is at least the fifth student in the last 10 years to be killed at a Detroit public school.

Classes were not dismissed after the incident, but Detroit schools Superintendent David Snead did order the school to find a new -- and secret -- location for a basketball game between Osborn and Denby high schools that was scheduled for Tuesday afternoon. Only the coaches and the players were told of the location ahead of time. No spectators, including parents, were allowed.

"I don't want any of the parties to use the basketball game as a reason for more violence," Snead said at the school.

Both the victim and the suspect had juvenile records. Last winter, Anderson was charged with carrying a concealed, nickel-plated .32-caliber revolver near his home. That case was dismissed for lack of evidence.

Williams was arrested last month after running away from Detroit police who had stopped a stolen car in which he was a passenger. His sister was driving, records show. Both were charged and the case is pending.

On Tuesday, a steady stream of friends and neighbors visited Anderson's mother's home in the 12100 block of Longview in northeast Detroit.

"It's sad, but a lot of people say it was bound to happen, because of the crowd he hung around," said Andre Davis, 28, who lives across the street from Anderson's home.

Anderson and Williams apparently were "throwing **gang** signs at each other" -- flashing threatening hand signals identifying their **gangs** -- in the school lunchroom Tuesday.

The rival **gang** members continued cursing each other as they walked to their next class.

"They had words with each other in the hall and then the words got up to where they were fighting," said one girl who would not give her name.

None of the students knew specifically what the boys were fighting about.

When they reached the second-floor entrance to the school gym, the attacker pulled out a steak knife and stabbed Anderson in the upper left chest.

"I've been stabbed," Anderson said, taking a few steps before he dropped to the floor.

Anderson's mother, Eleonor Fuller, denied her son was in a **gang**, but several of his friends said otherwise.

"He didn't put it way out in the open, but people knew he was in it," said Louis Harris, 17, a senior. "He didn't say much, but if you messed with him, he wasn't going to back down."

Friends said Anderson was a popular, well-dressed kid who regularly attended school, worked part time at a McDonald's restaurant and liked to play football and basketball in the neighborhood.

"He was a good kid," said Victor Jones, 16. "He didn't bother nobody. He wasn't looking for trouble. I never saw him with a handgun or doing nothing out of the way."

Anderson's niece, Latrease Anderson, 12, said her uncle would take her to the mall and give her money for video games. "He'd give you whatever he had, if you needed it."

Latrease said she didn't know why her uncle had joined a **gang**. "I guess most of his friends were in it," she said.

Denby students said the **gang** activity at the 2,200-student high school has gotten worse in recent years.

"It's a war out here," said Danarus Thomas, 17, a senior.

"It's a nice school, but the **gangs** just happen," said Martielle Barber, 16, a sophomore.

A 17-year-old girl who spoke only on the condition that her name not be used said **gang** activity is a major problem.

"There are a lot of different **gangs** at Denby. They get into it often. They fight about sign language and who's **toughest**. It's just who's the hardest or who can have the most fights," she said.

A **gang** squad investigator who would not give his name said **gangs** are a problem at Denby, but no worse than at other schools.

According to the Detroit Public Schools' own statistics, dozens of guns, knives and assorted other weapons are confiscated from students every year and hundreds of students are involved in violent incidents.

Students said living day-to-day with **gang** members makes it hard to come to school. Outside the school Tuesday, students complained about the school district's failure to protect them once they're inside the school. Metal detectors frequently don't work, they said. Security guards often ignore them when they do work properly, just waving students through.

"It goes 'beep, beep' and people keep walking," said Harris, Anderson's friend.

Four public safety officers work full time in the 180,000- square-foot school, patrolling the three floors and grounds of the building. Students must pass through one of four metal detectors to enter the building. All four metal detectors were working Tuesday, said Charlie Fobbs, an administrator who heads the district's clean, safe and healthy schools initiative.

One girl who would not give her name said male **gang** members frequently send female students over to flirt with male security guards so they can sneak weapons into the school.

"If they did more, this wouldn't have happened," said Kamdice Lambert, 15, a freshman.

She and two of her friends -- Tanisha Moore and Takesha Holloway, both 16-year-old sophomores -- said weapons searches are infrequent and random.

Violence is not unique to Denby. Last Wednesday, a 15- year-old Northern High School student was wounded while he and two friends were playing with a handgun while standing at their lockers. They apparently smuggled the gun past the school's two metal detectors, possibly by entering a door where there was no detector. The student, Pachino Benson, 15, was listed in fair condition Tuesday at Children's Hospital.

"We're doing everything we can, short of locking down the entire building, short of making our campuses prisons," Fobbs said.

He also said kids need to take some responsibility.

"Our kids also need to understand that, if they know of someone who has smuggled something in, they need to make us aware of it. It's for their safety that we do all of this," he said.

The school system has begun installing a closed-circuit TV monitoring system to help the limited number of public safety officers monitor activities at some schools. But Denby does not have such a system and is not scheduled to get one, said DPS spokesman Steve Wasko.

Funeral arrangements for Anderson are pending at Swanson Funeral Home at 806 E. Grand Blvd.

Staff writers Jack Kresnak and David Crumm and photographer Gabriel B. Tait contributed to this report.

NUMBERS TO CALL

If you or someone you know has been exposed to threats or recruitment by **gangs**, call:

- * Detroit Police Department anti- **gang** hot line: 1-313-224- **GANG**, anytime.
- * Detroit Public Schools crime line, 1-313-871-HELP, a confidential hot line for tips.
- * LA SED: 313-554-2025, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. weekdays; youth center, 1-313-841-1430, 10 a.m.-10 p.m. weekdays.
- * Latino Family Services: 1-313-841-7380, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. weekdays.
- * U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (gun violations): 1-800-ATF-GUNS, anytime.
- * Southwest Youth Assistance Program at Clark Park YMCA, 1-313-841-2702, 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Monday-Friday. Sponsors Teens Reaching Out, a youth support group.

VIOLENCE IN SCHOOL

Confiscated weapons in all Detroit Public Schools:

1993-94

Guns 81

Knives 106

Other 41

1994-95

Guns 35

Knives 84

Other 20

(includes starter pistols, BB guns, etc.)

Source: Detroit Public Schools

Caption: Photo Color MARY SCHROEDER; Map; Chart; Photo GABRIEL B. TAIT
Lakeisha Kennedy and Kamndice Lambert comfort a fellow student outside Denby High School on Tuesday afternoon. Demetrius Anderson, pictured at age 13, apparently had been flashing **gang** -related hand signals before the stabbing. Eleonor Fuller, mother of Demetrius Anderson, wears a T-shirt her son gave her. Anderson died Tuesday after being stabbed in the chest.

Memo: CHART ATTACHED; SIDEBAR ATTACHED;

CORRECTION PER D. ASHENFELTER, CITY EDITOR

Sixth paragraph contains sentence that should say: Anderson is at least the fifth student in the last 10 years to be killed at a Detroit public school.

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