

SCHOOL AIMS TO CHANGE

New hope at troubled C.W. Jefferys

Last spring's slaying of Jordan Manners, 15, was catalyst for change at troubled high school

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C.W. Jefferys Collegiate Institute has received a lot of support following a turbulent year – and it's making a difference.

Since the slaying of 15-year-old Jordan Manners, the Toronto District School Board has provided additional resources to the high school, says acting principal Jim Spyropoulos.

"The (board) has been amazing," he said. "... We talk a lot about wraparound supports (for students). You want to talk about wraparound? C.W. Jefferys has got wraparound love – from facilities, from employee services ..."

The school was allotted two extra full-time hall monitors, for a total of four; an extra vice-principal, for a total of three.

Money is coming to beef up the library and a new construction shop has been approved.

"We're fortunate that the people who are in the (new) roles have a really good grasp on the school and on the community," Spyropoulos said of the monitors and vice-principals.

Last May, Jordan Manners was shot in a hallway at the school, near Keele St. and Finch Ave. W., and later died.

Weeks later, the school's then-administrators were put on home leave amidst allegations of a sexual assault in the school that had gone unreported.

The board struck a safety advisory panel, headed by lawyer Julian Falconer, after the shooting. In its interim report, it found that the school, while relatively safe, had some areas of concern.

Students and visitors wandered the hallways during classes, the panel said.

It also cited the transfer of troubled, even criminal, students between schools, which some felt spread problems instead of dealing with them.

As part of C.W. Jefferys' safety plan, video cameras have been installed in the school and at every entrance. The front door is locked at 9:15 a.m.

"Now there aren't monitors at that door for 12 hours a day but because of the relationship we've tried to build and the hall monitors have tried to build, we spot intruders and trespassers so they don't feel welcome here," Spyropoulos said.

Last year, Jefferys took in 11 so-called safe-school transfers and transferred six students out.

"It's important that those situations are handled on a case-by-case basis and respect not only the individual's right to an education, but also the right to the rest of the school community to learn ..."

A vice-principal contacts the student's family prior to their arrival at the school.

"We have to work very hard at each and every one of those cases to make sure that we are doing the best for that student but also for the larger school," Spyropoulos said.

The school, on Sentinel Rd., has almost 900 students and runs a well-regarded arts program.

Its library is getting \$50,000 in resources and it is looking for space to open a construction tech shop.

"We're taking a hard look at what we can do that's a little bit different" to appeal to the small group of students at the school who aren't thinking of college or university, Spyropoulos said.

The final report from the Falconer panel is to be released mid-January.

Two youths have been charged with first-degree murder in Manners' death.

In the alleged sex assault, six youths are charged with gang sexual assault, forcible confinement and conspiracy to commit an indictable offence.