



KELVIN ADAMS

Superintendent of Schools

Valerie Carter-Thomas, Principal

Northwest Academy
For Saint Louis Public Schools

October 31, 2013

To Concerned Elected Officials and Concerned Citizens

Re: Northwest Academy student impressions of AG Koster's Urban Crime Summit AND a
Cordial invitation to our PEACE Summit, November 8, 2013

On September 18, 2013, students from Northwest Academy of Law High School traveled to the St. Louis Crime Summit held at St. Louis University Law School. Northwest Academy has a rigorous college-preparatory curriculum. The surrounding neighborhood of Walnut Park East, however, has high crime rates. The murder and robbery rate in the area is eight times the state average, and the total crime risk for those living in the area is more than six times the state average. We, the students at Northwest, have personally experienced violence, witnessed gang and drug activity, and had family members affected by crime.

We traveled to the Crime Summit with the hope that we could hear officials speak about crime and learn how we could make positive changes in our community. We wanted our voices heard. We wanted to show that the stereotypes about our race and our community were not true. We wanted to understand the causes and solutions to crime. We have summarized our impressions of the Crime Summit below.

Student Voices:

At the Crime Summit, we would have liked to have had a chance to speak. We wanted our voices to be heard. Instead we were asked to sit and listen. Not being asked our opinions, ideas, and insights made us feel like we had no role in being part of the solution to crime. We would like to work together with you to make our community safer. We are the community, and thus we have insight into the community and the power to change our community. We invite you to come dialogue with us at our Peace Summit that we have planned for November 8, 2013.

Stereotypes:

At the Crime Summit, we would have liked more positive images of African-American youth to be portrayed. Since the pictures shown during the slide show were mostly of African Americans, we felt like all African American youth were being labeled as gang members. In addition, because the photos were taken from individual Facebook accounts, we felt like they were taken out of context. We would like to partner with you. We would like to show you that we are different than the images and the statistics presented at the Crime Summit. We would like to help study and understand the statistical relationship between race and crime.

Solutions:

At the Crime Summit, we would have liked to have more solutions to crime presented. We felt a focus on solutions would have been helpful and inspiring to us. We would like more outreach from the police and government about existing youth programs. We suggest more flyers in schools, and more advertisements through Facebook, social media, radio, TV, and during school meetings.

We also suggest three areas for potential solutions:

- (1) **After-School Programs:** We would like more funding for school programs at Northwest so that all students, not just athletes and the few who are selected for special activities, can have a place to stay after school that is fun and interesting.
- (2) **Community Programs:** We would like you to help us ally with community groups to expand community and non-profit based after school programs that are free and close by so students can walk to them.
- (3) **Student Advisory Board:** We would also like to create a district-wide student advisory board to work with you, the local police force, government officials, and local alderman, on finding new allies and new solutions to crime.

We care. We want to make a difference. We want you to hear our voices, we want you to begin a conversation with us, and we want to partner with you as you draft legislation and create new programs based on the presentations at the Crime Summit. We believe that we can be responsible partners and want to help develop new programs for youth.

On November 8, 2013, we will be hosting a Peace Summit at Northwest Academy of Law. We invite you to attend and participate. We look forward to showing you our energy, voices, and insights!

Respectfully yours,

Aryonna Nettles
Kendra Ruff
Janouca Randle
Mia Smith
Steven Mitchell
Shauntrice Moore
Lia Delaney
Ireen well
Realty Cooper
Kella Smith
Meyana Bush
Lynia Hightower

Sadi Roberson
Dinetta Guiens
Anyia Smith
Mia Smith
Makayla Lenods
~~Lenods~~
Steven Mitchell

