

## STOPWATCH WEEK 23

### WEATHER ADVISORY

***Please remember during periods of snowy, inclement weather  
StopWatch and Truancy Watch will be cancelled.  
Inclement weather defined; snowy, hazardous conditions, sleet  
conditions or temperatures below a reasonable level - 18 degrees.***

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### ***Boston School Police Sergeant Tom Giannino and BPS Attendance Officer John Chaney***

On February 4<sup>th</sup> during the Truancy Watch at Downtown Crossing, we encountered a youth who appeared to be either 14 or 15 years old, aimlessly wandering around the entrance to the Orange Line south entrance as he came into focus of the Truancy Watch. The youth was approached by the Truancy Watch team members including Boston Public School Attendance Officers John Chaney and Walter King. The encounter proved to be difficult as the youth immediately exhibited “attitudinal resistance” to BPS Attendance Officers King and Chaney.

The youth freely admitted to the attendance officers that at 10:15 am, he knew he was late for school but stated he felt annoyed by the interaction because he was on his way to school and didn’t feel the conversation was necessary. The attendance officers explained their presence and the reason for the encounter. The youth became less and less forthcoming as he was questioned by the BPS officials. In the end, we could not identify the youth increasing the concern of the attendance officers.

As the encounter proceeded, two adult bystanders became interested in the encounter and began to question the Truancy Watch members, in front of the youth, about their purpose. The two civilian men were given an explanation of the Truancy Watch and were asked to assist if they felt they could better handle the situation due to their openly questioning the officials and the obvious effect it had on the youth who became more agitated. We made every effort to involve the participation of these adults. One of the two men attempted to earnestly talk to the student who was visibly upset and began to cry.

At first, these two adults were subtly critical of the approach used by the Truancy Watch team. However, when one of them attempted to reach the student, he too failed to quell the student's anxiety and de-escalate the student's growing hostility toward the official encounter. Hopefully, this entire scenario provided insight to these observers, who were initially concerned and critical of the Truancy Watch officials' intervention effort.

The concerned adult, of the same race as the student, thought the attitude and the resistance to cooperate of the youth may have been solely a function of race. The adult attempted to quell the student's attitude by identifying with the student as a man of the same race. The closest the Truancy Watch team came to reaching the youth was showing respect and genuine concern for the student. This approach appeared to work better but still had only a reasonable level of success in reducing the youth's agitation. It was apparent to all involved; including the civilians, there were underlying reasons for the young man's attitude and agitation. Unfortunately, we were unable to determine the root cause of the agitation and the truancy before the student was on his way. This example of youth intervention demonstrates the difficulty and the patience required to successfully interact with youth. It illustrates the need for training as well as the required empathy and knowledge of adolescent psychological development.

The successful approaches used to engage a student are those approaches that are used simultaneously and multi-directionally. The common thread of success lies in patience and respect. As we have experienced, there is not a lot of time during the Truancy Watch encounters and surveying in order to develop a valid assessment of the students that are encountered. The Truancy Watch partners have to quickly identify potential problems or pitfalls and assess the personality of the encountered youth and then do the best they can to reach the student and address the appropriate issues.

Our success is clear by the conclusion of our encounters. Success is when an encounter ends with students who are found smiling or who have departing friendly words with the truancy team member who initiated the intervention. We have completed close to two thousand Truancy Watch surveys over the past four years and seldom find students unwillingly to talk to the Truancy Watch team. This is because of the meaningful interactions and conversations that transpire. When something goes wrong during an adolescent encounter at a Truancy Watch, as it has, the truancy team quickly employs all the experience and training as well as their professionalism to dissipate or

resolve potential adolescent conflict and get to the root cause of the problem. This is done in a positive way: our goal is to be very deliberate in conveying the we care about these students. There have been few unpleasant experiences at our Truancy Watches. Our partners are always prepared to interact and try to determine the reason for a student's truancy or resistant attitudes that are sometimes exemplified by a few truant students during the surveys.

The Truancy Watch is a valuable tool for reasons that extend beyond the "watches." The encounters are a personal training tool in itself. The opportunity to speak to unknown youths in their environment in a non-confrontational setting has dynamic personal effect with far reaching rewards. The experiences can be fulfilling –*for both officers and students.*

Our current Truancy Watch partners are especially necessary as they reflect a diverse gathering of expertise. It is of utmost importance to include members of the Truancy Watch partnership to reflect the culture and various races of the students encountered. The strength of the program and the success of our efforts depend on our partners and their commitment to youth. **Please know, all the continued support from our partnership is valued. We appreciate those who have made the commitment and we encourage more involvement in this worthwhile project.**

## **"STOPWATCH HOTLINE"**

**617 222 1060**

***A non-emergency alert line designated to prepare for unanticipated juvenile issues!***

**STOPWATCH SCHEDULE WEEK 23**  
**February 8<sup>th</sup> – February 12<sup>th</sup>**



**Monday**

***JFK/UMASS***

***1:45pm- 3:00pm***

**Tuesday**

***Forest Hills***

***1:45pm-3:00pm***

**Wednesday**

***\*\*\* Nothing Scheduled for Wednesday\*\*\****

**Thursday**

***Truancy Watch Forest Hills***

***9:30am-11:30am***

**Friday**

***JFK/UMASS***

***1:45pm-3:00pm***

**Coordinators:**

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| <b>Chief Eric Weston</b>                   | <b>617 635-8000</b> |
| <b>Boston School Police</b>                |                     |
| <b>Lieutenant Detective Mark Gillespie</b> | <b>617 222 1062</b> |
| <b>Sergeant Detective Kelly Nee</b>        | <b>617 343 5528</b> |
| <b>Boston Police</b>                       |                     |
| <b>Detective Paul Petrucci</b>             | <b>617 222-1064</b> |