DAYTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

DAYTON, OHIO

THE URBAN HIGH SCHOOL DISORDER REDUCTION PROJECT

RESTORING SAFE SCHOOLS AND INSPIRING ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

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ABSTRACT

The Urban High School Disorder Reduction Project was a combined effort between the Dayton Police Department (DPD), Dayton Public Schools, the Montgomery County Juvenile Court and the Juvenile Division of the Montgomery County Prosecutor's Office. The problem was disorder in and around Belmont High School marked by disturbances, fights, growing numbers of calls for service to the Dayton Police Department and poor educational performance measures at the school. The project employed Problem Oriented Policing strategies, including Crime Prevention through Environmental Design, to deny opportunities for disorder and crime by engaging community partners in a unified alliance. Success was achieved through massive reduction of crimes and calls for service and great improvements towards meeting educational goals along with a safer overall environment for students and neighbors.

Belmont High School at 2323 Mapleview Avenue is an urban high school located in southeast Dayton *(Figure 2)* in a mixed use neighborhood of single and multi-family residences, businesses and government facilities *(Figure 3)*. It opened in 1956 and has since housed between 800 and 900 students each year. In school year 2009-2010, Belmont High School reported an average daily student enrollment of 807 students in grades 9-12. The student population is 44.4% black (non-Hispanic), 43.4% white (non-Hispanic), 5.6% Hispanic and 5.4% multi-racial. The school is 85% economically disadvantaged, 20% limited English proficient (12 languages) and 28.1% students with disabilities. Between 2005-2006 and 2010-2011 school years, 145 violent crimes were reported at Belmont High School. In 2008, the number of reported violent crimes peaked at 45, a 38% increase over the yearly average of 28 and a 15% increase over the previous year's number of 39. For the 2008-2009 school year, crimes in a 1000 foot radius around the school, including three troublesome bus stops, totaled

90 crimes (using NIBRS based reporting); 51 assaults, 3 robberies, 3 weapons violations and 2 drug offenses during school hours.

After implementation of the response plan, overall crime during the 2009-2010 school year totaled 21 crimes; which is a decrease of 76.6% in the same geographical area. The most notable decline was in Assaults with a decrease from 51 assaults before the intervention down to only 4 assaults after the intervention; which is a 92% decrease *(Figure 4)*.

SCANNING

In November 2008, the Dayton Police Department assigned a new commander to its 2nd District. At the time, 2nd District was responsible for approximately 59,000 citizens and over 46,000 calls for service per year. While preparing for the monthly COMSTAT presentation in December of 2008, Belmont High School was identified as utilizing a large portion of police resources, such as calls for service and numbers of crimes in and around the area of the high school. This prompted an investigation into the underlying cause of calls and crimes in and around the high school. In addition, residential neighbor complaints and complaints from the Belmont Business Association supported initial data suggesting the problem was growing beyond the school grounds.

During the scanning phase of the project, the Dayton Police Department was struggling with a net loss of 30% of its sworn contingent caused by significant losses in revenue and mandatory retirements. In light of anticipated and continuing staffing losses, Chief Richard Biehl clearly identified problem-oriented policing strategies as a top priority for the department to conserve patrol staffing resources. From September 8 through April 4 of the 2008-2009 school year, Belmont High School registered nearly twice the number of calls for service (98) as the next highest urban high school in the same school district (Dunbar High School with 51 calls for service) and half of all calls for service at all five of the high schools in the district (203). Of arrests made at all of the high schools, Belmont High School accounted for 67% of the total (33 arrests out of 50 arrests for all schools). The highest call categories were assaults, drug activity, disturbances/disorderly juveniles and threats. High frequency arrest categories included assault, possession of drugs and robbery *(Figure 5)*.

Lieutenant Christopher Williams, Commander of the Second Patrol District, identified the problem as both a priority for a targeted response effort and a good candidate for a Problem-Oriented Policing approach.

This problem was nearly self-selected as a candidate for this project from the overwhelming number of problems competing for valuable police resources for several reasons. It simply could not be ignored or postponed. The disorder was consuming too many hours of patrol time, impacting the stability of the neighborhood and destroying a once-orderly and storied high school. This particular initiative also engaged several community partners; the Dayton Public School District, the Montgomery County Juvenile Court and the Belmont Business Association. All three entities shared an established identification as natural stakeholders in this project, which facilitated the initial project phases.

As the scanning phase was underway, Belmont's disorder problem began appearing in the local news along with embarrassing comments from the school's parents *(Figures 6-7)*. One incident occurred to elevate this project to the highest priority over all other problems in the police district. On March 25, 2009 at 4:30 pm, a public transit bus carrying Belmont High School students was stopped at an intersection near the school at 2 Watervliet Avenue *(Figure 8-9)*. There was a disturbance on the bus and several students threatened the bus driver. The bus driver signaled a passing patrol officer for help. The officer requested backup and a second officer arrived. Before the officers could fully assess the situation, the scene erupted in chaos and a signal 99 (officer in trouble) was initiated, prompting every available officer to respond. Ultimately, two students were arrested for Menacing, Disorderly Conduct and Resisting Arrest and a third was arrested for Disorderly Conduct; along with the requisite complaints leveled against the police by the arrested students and their parents.

The initial level of analysis included calls for service, the nature of crimes and the offender group (mostly juveniles). The statistics for Belmont High School were compared to four other urban high schools in the school district:

- Dunbar High School
- Thurgood Marshall High School
- Stivers School for the Arts
- Patterson Career Academy

While all calls for service and crimes were compared, the specific focus was on violent, property and disorder crimes.

ANALYSIS

The problem was statistically evaluated through standard crime analysis, including a review and comparison of calls for service, reported crimes and arrests *(Figure 10)*. The analysis was conducted geographically, by examining the school, 1000 feet around the school, and the three bus stops *(Figure 11)*. As well as by premise type in comparison to similar high schools in the same city, school district and classification. An intuitive analysis was conducted by meeting with patrol officers to collect more background information on the nature of the problem and specific incident stories. Additionally, meetings were held with the former and current Principal of Belmont High School, Dayton Public Schools Security, and Dayton Police Crime Analysts to examine the impact of crime and disorder on academic performance and quality of life issues in the student population.

Many factors could have played a part in the problem. The City of Dayton has been experiencing a very long and sustained economic downturn. A dwindling tax base coupled with population loss has manifested into a host of economic and social problems affecting nearly every aspect of the inner city environment. Subsequent to classic inner city issues such as urban blight, and staffing cuts, Belmont High Schools environment began to slowly mirror societal problems. Overcoming larger societal issues by addressing specific identifiable problems in and around the high school was the challenge.

With 45 violent crimes occurring in the 2008-2009 school year, a more in-depth analysis showed the problem actually began in the year 2001 and appears to have grown slowly in intensity and frequency *(Figure 12 – data from 2005)* affecting many different groups. The participants were identified as offenders of various types, victims, students, Dayton Public School as an organization and as individual employees, the Dayton Police Department, neighbors and businesses. Offender types ranged from low level disorderly behavior to opportunistic misdemeanor crimes to violent felonies. Interviews with school officials revealed that student and teacher/staff victims were motivated by basic survival. They simply wanted to endure the school day without repeat victimization by school bullies and criminal behavior. With a focus on basic survival, they were distracted from attempting or achieving academic excellence. The academic harms not only affected the offenders and victims, but the bystander students, teachers and the school district as a whole.

With the hiring of Belmont's new principal, David White, Dayton Public Schools became the main sponsor and plan administrator. After all, there was nothing to gain by allowing the problem to spiral downward. The police department was motivated by the basic public safety mission to ensure the school, students, staff and neighborhood were safe.

There were numerous harms presented by the crime and disorder in and around Belmont High School. It created an unsafe educational environment for students and teachers, both in terms of the physical dangers and the distractions to the learning process. It permitted disorder in the surrounding residential neighborhood and business community, which in turn threatened quality of life, property values, the stability of business commitments to the area and the ability to attract and retain quality residents and businesses. The problem consumed too many police resources, in terms of time spent by call evaluators and dispatchers to receive calls and time spent by officers responding to calls for service, investigating crimes, issuing citations, making arrests, transporting prisoners and preparing crime reports. The problem damaged the school's reputation, leading to an inability to attract and retain quality students. Belmont High School has been in academic emergency since 2006. The

"emergency" designation allows parents living in the school district to avoid Belmont High School and instead, send their children to private schools with tuition mostly paid for by the State of Ohio.

Prior to the problem solving project, crime and disorder at the school was addressed with traditional policing methods. Officers responded to calls, which were treated as isolated incidents. Where appropriate, crime reports were completed, citations were issued and arrests were made. The result of those responses was an increase in calls, crimes, citations and arrests. The traditional policing response provided short term solutions to immediate problems, which were actually symptoms of the larger underlying issues. Since the root causes of disorder and crime were not treated, responding to the symptoms failed to improve the overall and growing problem.

The intuitive analysis revealed significant factors in the causes and underlying conditions precipitating the problem. The assignment of classrooms inside the school building was not organized in a manner that was conducive to order. It in fact contributed to the disorder. Students were running from one end of the building to the opposite end between classes. This led to collisions between students and confrontations between students of different age groups and academic classes. The unnecessary interactions led to many of the assaults and robberies. Students were not always monitored after school as they left the building and walked to public bus stops and nearby alleys. They enjoyed relative anonymity because no responsible stakeholders were there to identify them and correct or witness their behavior.

The nature of the problem was largely a place management issue. The vast majority of the problems, including disorder and crime in the neighborhood, were directly or indirectly linked to Belmont High School. The most visible indicator of the extent of the problem was that patrol officer efficiency in the affected district was reduced to 69% in part due to responding to calls for service in and around Belmont High School and/or involving Belmont High School students *(Figure 13)*. Due to this and other issues, 31% of the districts calls occurring on the day shift had to be assigned to officers in other patrol districts. Therefore, our best opportunity to manage the problem was to manage the place.

In studying Belmont's incidents, certain behaviors were found to be common to numerous incidents; assaults make up 78% of violent crimes *(Figure 12)*. We know that offenders can sometimes be controlled by handlers. In this case, handlers could be identified as parents, teachers, administrators and even the juvenile court system with their vast array of services including holding parents accountable for their children's behavior.

The students and the areas seen in Figure 11 were identified as targets early on. Hot spots of activity were identified as alleyways, bus stops, bathrooms and even the hallways themselves. Addressing such a diverse area required the combined approach of the Dayton Police Department and Dayton Public Schools.

Since one of the problems was identified as bus stops and the transportation of students, Rapid Transit Authority (RTA) was contacted early on in the analysis phase. The school used a two busing systems – one for special needs students and another utilized RTA. Six RTA buses transported students directly to the school from their homes and back again. The buses also picked up students in front of the school property. Three buses are public route buses. One of those buses picks up students at an identified hot spot on Nordale Avenue. Two of the buses pick up at the hottest spot outside the school grounds at the corner of Watervliet Avenue and Wayne Avenues. Clearly, the "Routine Activity Theory" explained in large part why crime was occurring at these places; common time frames coupled with suitable targets, lack of guardians along with highly motivated offenders. These bus stops along with the alleyways leading to them were selected for intervention by uniform personnel from the Dayton Police Department working in tandem with school administrators.

Since a large majority of the offenders are juveniles, we quickly sought the input and guidance of the Common Pleas Court, Juvenile Division, of Montgomery County. The assessment of offenders and their handlers referred to the Juvenile Division would be an extremely important component of our intervention. Some of the goals of the Juvenile Court System such as holding accountable those who fail to meet their obligations as parents, guardians or custodians fit perfectly in our holistic approach in addressing the "handler/offender" portion of the crime triangle.

Juvenile court's abilities in assessing a myriad of issues such as mental health, alcohol and drugs, coupled with identifying abused, dependent and neglected children would be very beneficial to short and long term intervention for troubled students and their families. For example, juvenile court deals with complaints involving adults failing to send their child to school.

The juvenile court was a willing and sympathetic partner to our cause. They provided a breakdown totaling 178 juveniles, 262 cases and 306 referrals for all Belmont High School students for the school year 2008-2009. These numbers were used as one of the benchmarks in the assessment phase *(Figure 14)*.

RESPONSE

During the analysis phase of this project, several alternative solutions were considered to address the disorder and crime problem at Belmont High School. Traditional policing methods were clearly not sustainable, given the dwindling staff resources available to the Dayton Police Department. Stakeholders considered converting the high school into a magnet school or reducing the student population to only eleventh and twelfth grade students. They also evaluated the possibility of closing the alleyways around the school to control vehicle and traffic flow, posting officers around the school and/or assigning a full-time officer to patrol the school.

Dayton Public Schools had already planned to construct a completely new building for Belmont High School as a traditional high school. This eliminated the possibility of converting the school to a magnet school or reducing the student population to only eleventh and twelfth grade students. The analysis revealed that traditional policing methods were not effective and not sustainable in light of continuously declining staffing resources. There was no available funding for physical modifications like closing the alleyways or staffing additional patrol officers, either in or around the school.

In addition to the already planned investment by Dayton Public Schools, the project staff weighed other evaluation criteria prior to project implementation. First and foremost was cost and

assignment of resources. Both the Dayton Police Department and Dayton Public Schools were facing significant budget challenges. Staffing was an issue for both organizations and to complicate funding issues, the Dayton Police Department was anticipating a significant and imminent loss in staffing due to expected retirements in and before 2011. At the outset of this project, the Dayton Police Department anticipated the loss of roughly 10-20% of it's workforce in or before 2011, notwithstanding any additional personnel losses due to other reasons and attrition. Furthermore, the city was already experiencing significant budget challenges and during the project period, National Cash Register, the last of six Fortune 500 company in Dayton, Ohio, announced its intentions to relocate its headquarters and operations to Deluth, Georgia. Combined with the extreme loss of revenues, the City of Dayton and Dayton Public Schools shared the "bottom line" mandate to carefully guard against any expenditures above that necessary to provide basic services. Dayton Public Schools' Chief of Security advised that, not only did Dayton Public Schools not have available funding to expand security personnel at the school, but the entire security program was at risk of being eliminated altogether for lack of funding.

The primary project goals were to reduce crime and disorder in and around the school while improving quality of life for the students, staff, neighborhood and businesses and improve the academic environment. The corresponding measurable objectives were a decrease in calls for service, decrease in reported crimes, decrease in juvenile arrests, improvement in academic standings and improvement in grade to grade promotion rates for Belmont High School.

The available resources to help solve the problem were: existing patrol officers assigned to the affected patrol district, Dayton Public Schools management, Belmont High School staff, and the Montgomery County Juvenile Court. Additionally, alternative schools were offered to some troubled students who have been identified as possessing special skills or interests. Furthermore, local business leaders pushed for culture change in the school and supported project efforts by both the school and the police department.

Prior to implementing the response plan, the project committee and Lieutenant Williams held meetings with all stakeholders and continuously communicated with project partners. He conducted extensive follow up with all partners to review the plan and ensure every member was engaged and committed to the plan, goals and objectives. Only one major difficulty was encountered in response implementation, which was to elicit a complete and total agreement amongst the stakeholders that the problem was so large that it had to be addressed from multiple angles. From the perspective of the police department, the school and the community, doing nothing or maintaining the status quo was ethically and morally unacceptable.

Ultimately, the project committee and stakeholders agreed on the following strategy:

	Key Finding	***Resolution Strategy***
1.	Increasing number of calls for service in and around Belmont resulting in numerous issues and affecting numerous groups	Meetings and continuous communication with all community partners
2.	Small number of students were influencing or directly causing large number of crimes; especially assaults	Identify students for special intervention who were responsible for crime and disorder through arrest records
3.	Unnecessary interaction among students between classes was causing assaults and additional crimes	Reassign classrooms to group students by grade level as much as possible within the school building *(Figure 15)*
4.	Many problem students were juveniles	Vertical Prosecution / Special response from Juvenile Court and Juvenile Division prosecutors to emphasize a no tolerance policy for violations and crimes committed on and around school property while making appropriate referrals and addressing individual needs
5.	Outside of class, students had insufficient supervision	Assign school staff members to monitor the lunch period as well as the school grounds and nearby "hotspots" (routes to bus stops) after school *(Figure 11)*
6.	Problem was not isolated to just school grounds, but extending out to nearby student bus stops	Assign patrol officers to assist with monitoring "hotspots" and addressing violations in two week periods until order is restored (ten weeks – no overtime utilized)
7.	Vague rules allowed students to find excuses for bad behavior	Remove excuses by establishing clear rules for student behavior in and around the school

8.	Minimal enforcement of rules once violated	Reinforce rules by making arrests for criminal activity, issuing citations for disorder violations, and subjecting students off school grounds to discipline

ASSESSMENT

The first preliminary assessment after response implementation (August 2009) showed a significant impact on the problem. The method of evaluation was primarily statistical analysis of calls for service and crimes in a multi-year comparison. The evaluation was conducted by Dayton Police Department Crime Analysts, Lieutenant Williams and the Crime Prevention Officer.

Dayton Public Schools and Belmont High school offered internal data that accurately reflects the incremental improvements necessary to saving the whole school, specifically promotion rates, or the numbers of students who graduate from one class to the next each year. They reported a 54% increase in the 9th grade promotion rate and a 38% increase in the 10th grade promotion rate from 2008 to 2011. In addition, the number of 11th grade students who took the ACT for college admission increased from 8% in 2008-2009 to 80% in 2010-2011 *(Figure 16)*.

Juvenile Courts statistics showed a massive drop in numbers, cases and referrals of Belmont High School students yearly based by school years 2008-2009, 2009-2010 and 2010-2011. This was an expected positive result based on the intervention of the Dayton Police and Belmont High School *(Figure 14)*.

See the following for additional results of the project: (2008-2009 vs. 2009-2010 school years)

- Crimes at Belmont dropped from 66 to 16, a 76% decrease *(Figure 17)*
- Crimes around Belmont dropped from 90 to 21, a 77% decrease *(Figure 4)*
- Simple Assaults at Belmont dropped from 38 to 2, a 95% decrease *(Figure 18)*
- For the entire calendar year, crimes around Belmont averaged 18 crimes per quarter in 2009 vs. only 8 crimes per quarter in 2010 *(Figure 19)*

When implementing the response plan, two issues needed to be considered:

- The possible backlash of reassigning some students identified as needing a fresh start to alternative schools.
- Criticism could have occurred when the high school began disciplinary action against students for actions in and around the bus stops.

All of the response goals were accomplished and additionally, there was one unanticipated secondary accomplishment. Nearly all of the displaced students returned to Belmont High School and since their return, there has been no noticeable increase in crime or disorder. One of the students who was removed for bad behavior and low academic performance was transferred to an alternative trade and technology school. That student transformed from a poor performer with little chance of success to not only graduating from that school, to the valedictorian of her class.

There was some consideration to what methods or tools may have made the response more effective. One of the possible resources not used was the concept of using neighbors to help monitor students after school. This idea was dismissed largely due to concerns of retaliation against the volunteer neighbors. Several avenues were pursued to increased police and security staffing in and around the school. Budget issues denied every possible extra staffing option. While this was disappointing, it did not have any noticeable impact on the effectiveness of the project.

There was great concern about displacement in the initial stages of the project, specifically in relocating problem students to other schools. Moving the crime and disorder problem to another high school in the same school district would have not only hindered this project, but would have created a whole new set of problems. Statistical analysis in comparison to other high schools within the City of Dayton both before and after implementation of the intervention shows very significant improvements at Belmont High School with no diffusion to the other schools *(Figures 20-21)*.

Continued monitoring of the project is essential, as well as continued communication with Belmont High School's staff, students and parents. We continue to improve those relationships by holding periodic in-school trainings like Prom DUI prevention in partnership with Miami Valley

Hospital *(Figure 22)*. We also continue to monitor the school during our monthly CAPERS (Crime Analysis Police Enforcement and Response Strategies) meetings with command staff and other city agencies.

As a result, the National Education Association visited Belmont High School to study its restructured learning environment for possible use or replication in other school districts or communities. With the continued efforts of the Dayton Police Department and Dayton Public Schools, we feel the significant reductions can be maintained and replicated to ensure the safety of our schools.

APPENDIX

Figure 1:

Figure 2:

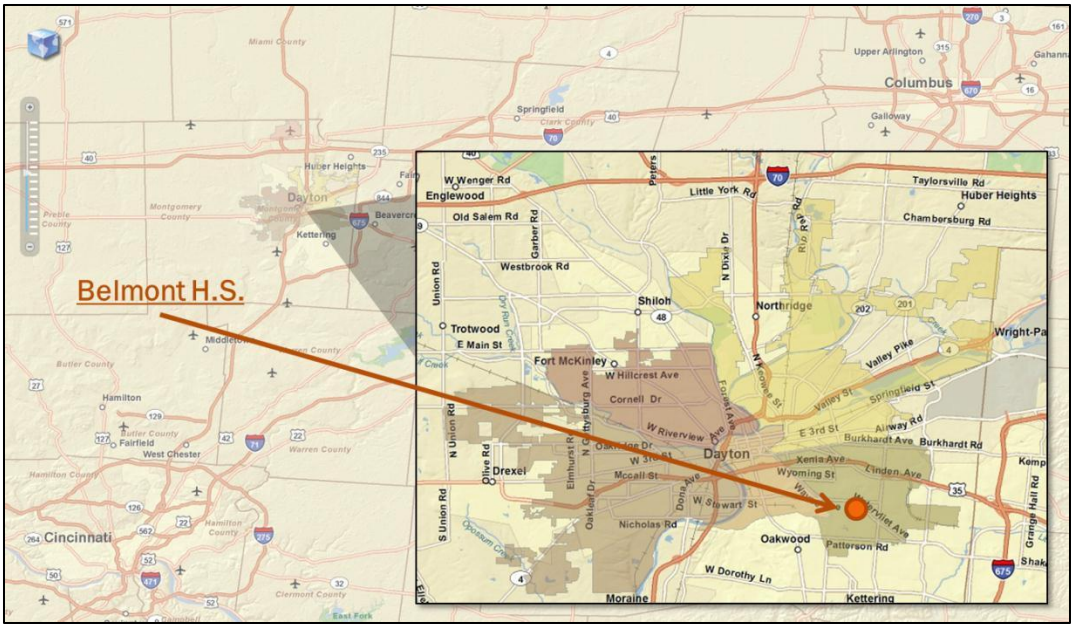


Figure 3:

Figure 4:

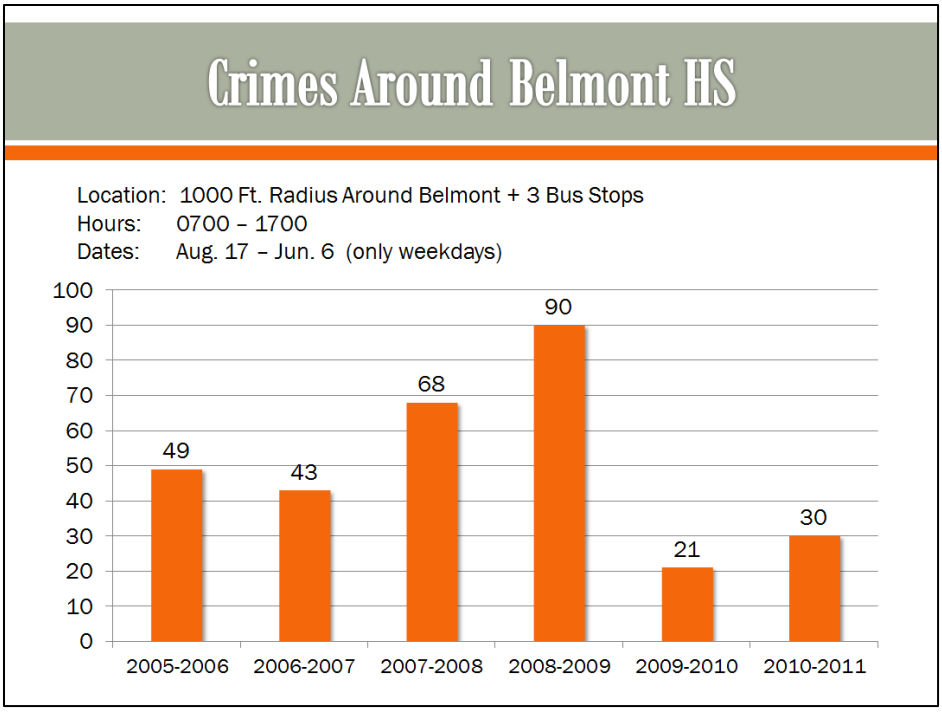


Figure 5:

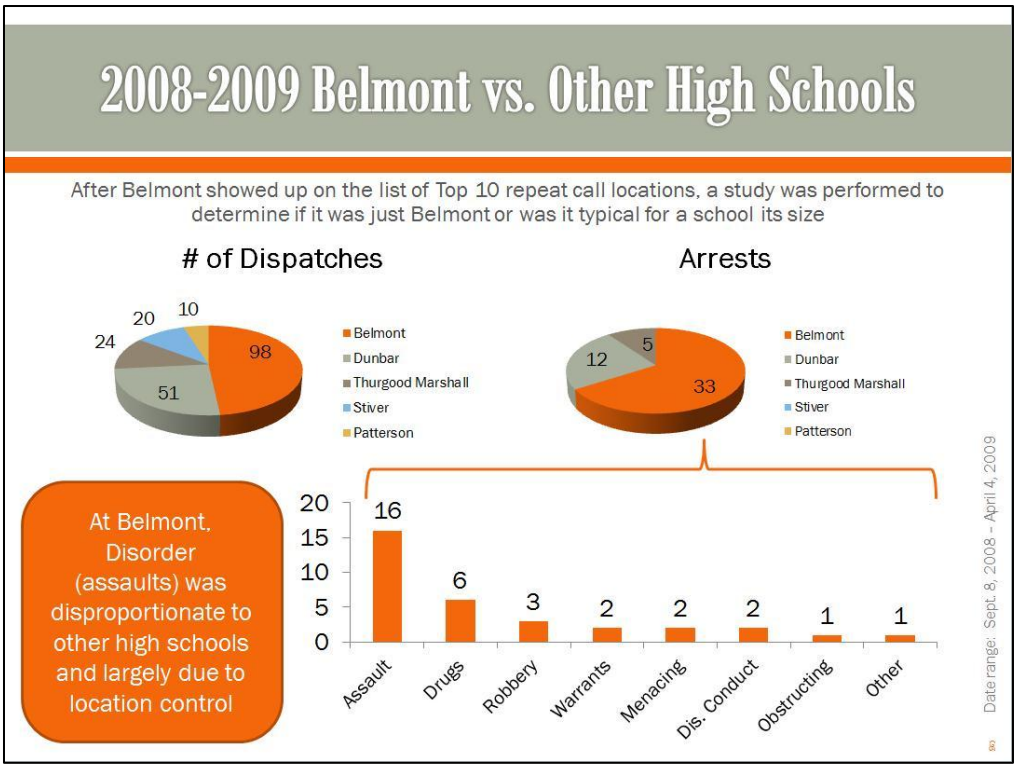


Figure 6:

Figure 7:

Chair used as weapon in high school assault

By Kyle Nagel | Wednesday, March 18, 2009, 09:35 AM

DAYTON — Police responded to Belmont High School on Tuesday, March 17, after a male student hit another male student in the back with a chair.

Officers were dispatched at 11:40 a.m. after a teacher reported an assault had occurred, according to a police report. The two students began fighting about hygiene, and one said he had enough, the report said.

The upset student picked up a chair and struck the other student in the back, and the fight escalated, the report said. Two school employees struggled to separate the two, but the aggressor again picked up a desk-and-chair combination and tossed it at the injured student, although it missed him, the report said.

The two continued to fight until separated, and the chair-throwing student had a bloody nose. The other student was removed to the front office, the report said.

Comments

By belmontsucks

March 24, 2009 7:51 AM | Link to this Report abuse

Belmont sucks as a school. It used to be descent, no more, I might move my kids over to Wilbur Wright again.

By JL

March 26, 2009 11:32 AM | Link to this Report abuse

My grandson goes to Belmont, and it seems the principal and teachers CANNOT control their students. Fights are daily. What is wrong with these incompetent people?

By connie

March 26, 2009 12:23 PM | Link to this Report abuse

That school is unreal My daughter goes there and everyother day i pick her up the police is there. They had a dance a few weeks ago and the students who didnt attend the school caused a big fight a teacher was injured . Dayton Police had to spray pepper spray to control the crowd. I want her out of Belmont

Figure 8:

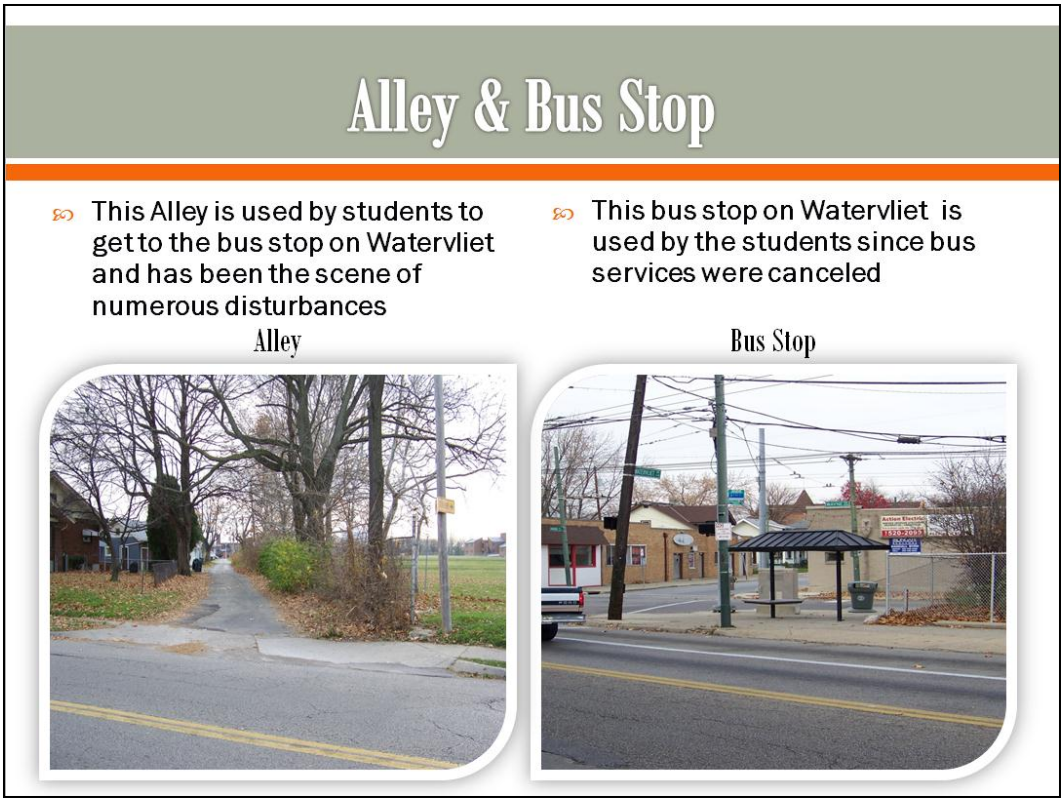
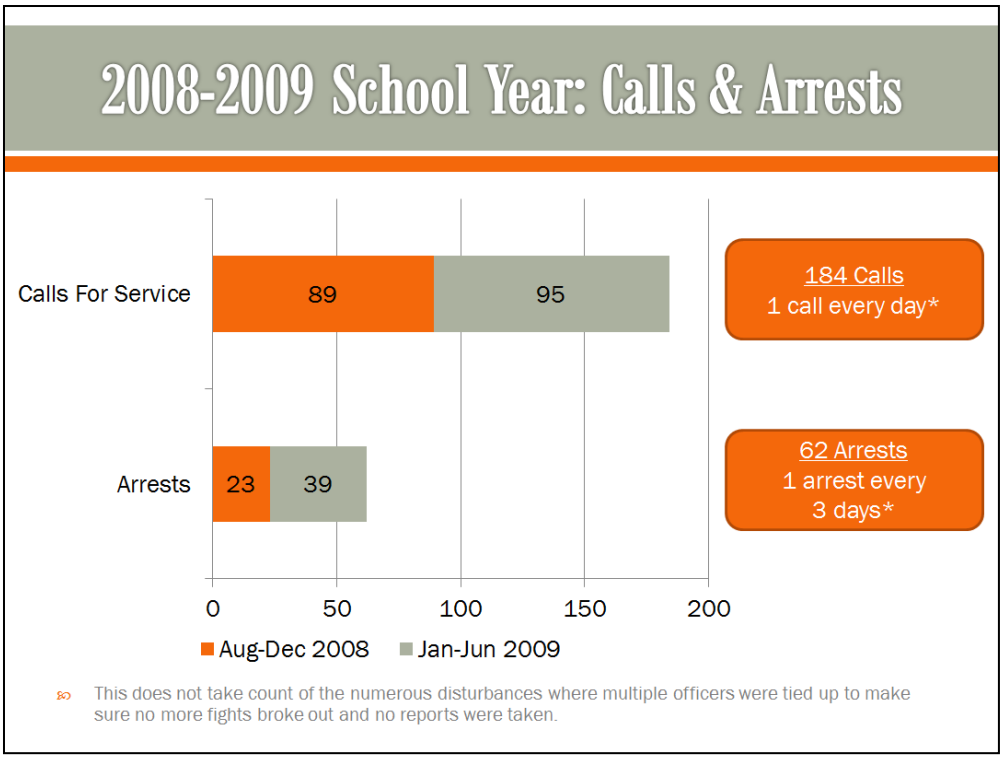


Figure 9:

Figure 10:



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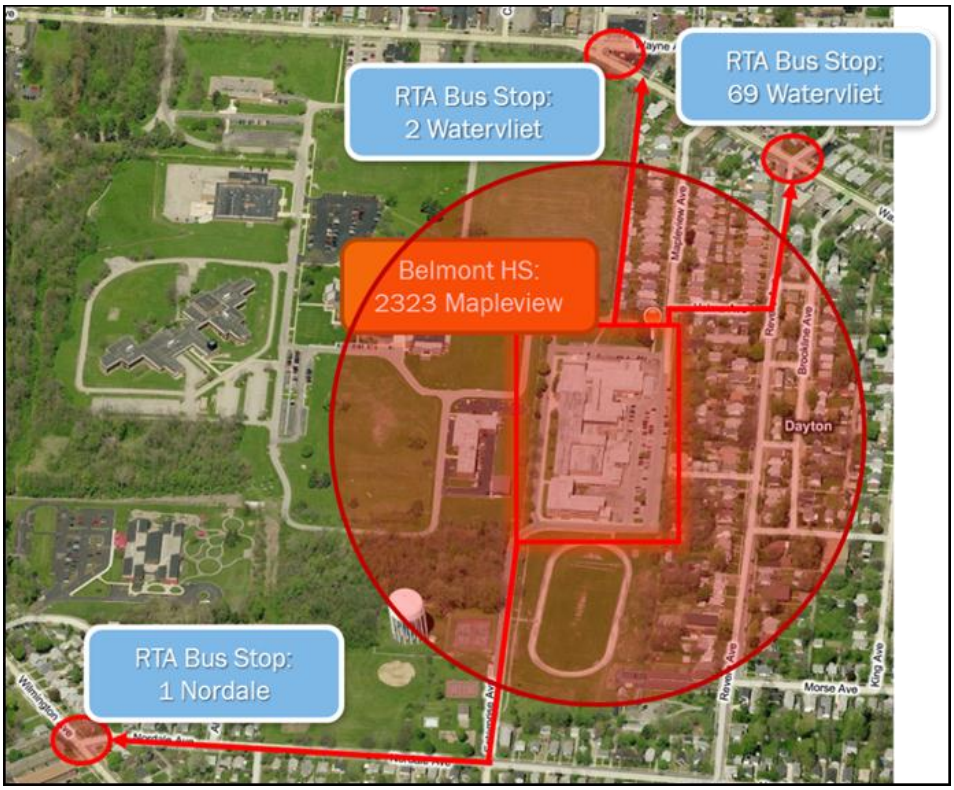


Figure 12:

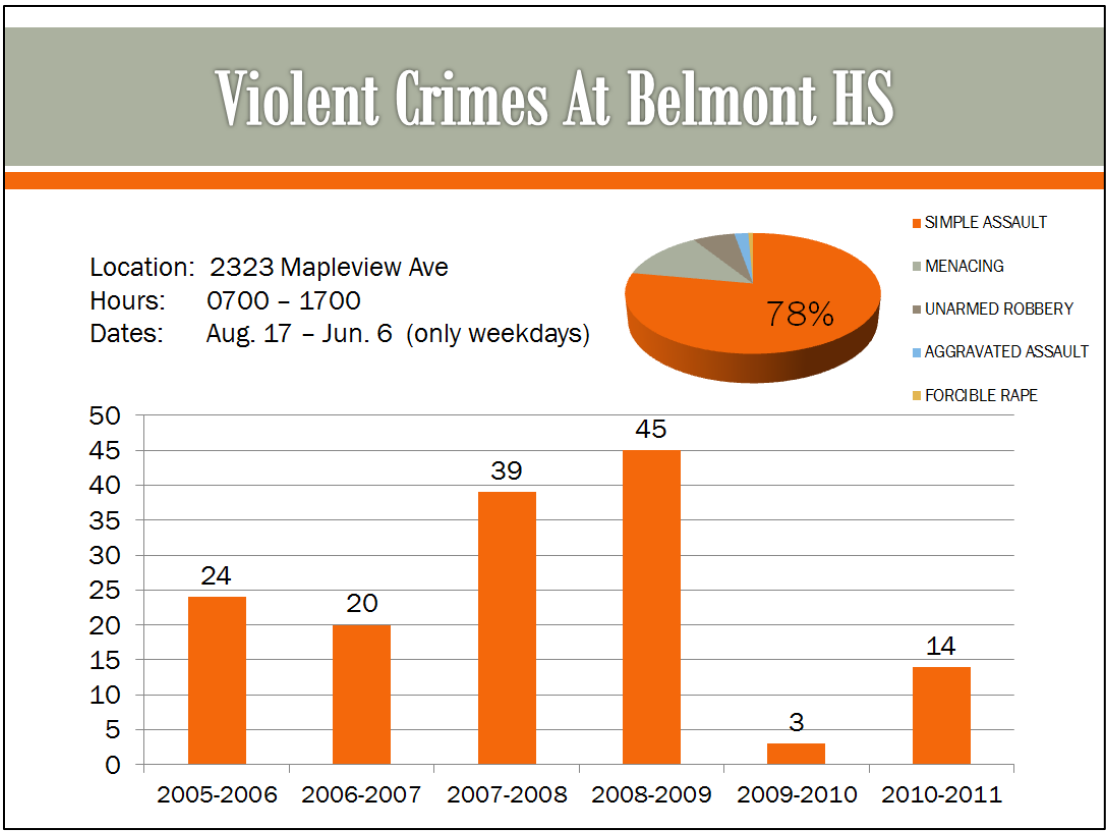
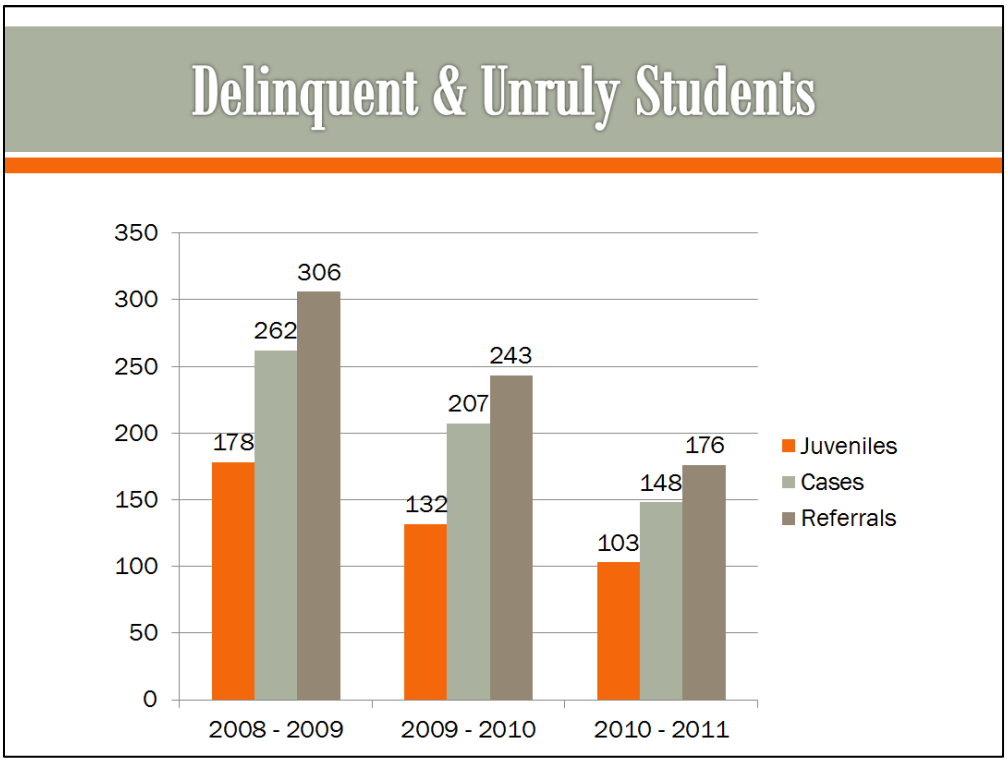


Figure 13:

	1st Shift	2nd Shift	3rd Shift	TOTAL
D1	127%	120%	105%	116%
D2	120%	69%	85%	88%
D3	144%	118%	104%	119%
D5	123%	100%	99%	105%
D8	190%	136%	95%	131%
TOTAL	133%	105%	97%	107%

Figure 14:



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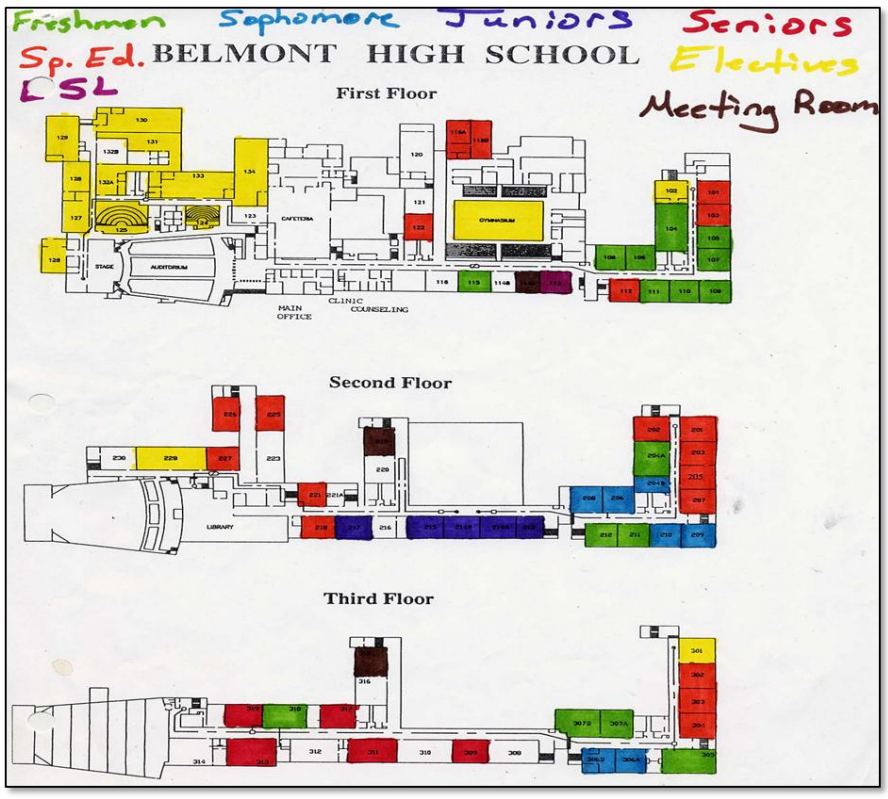

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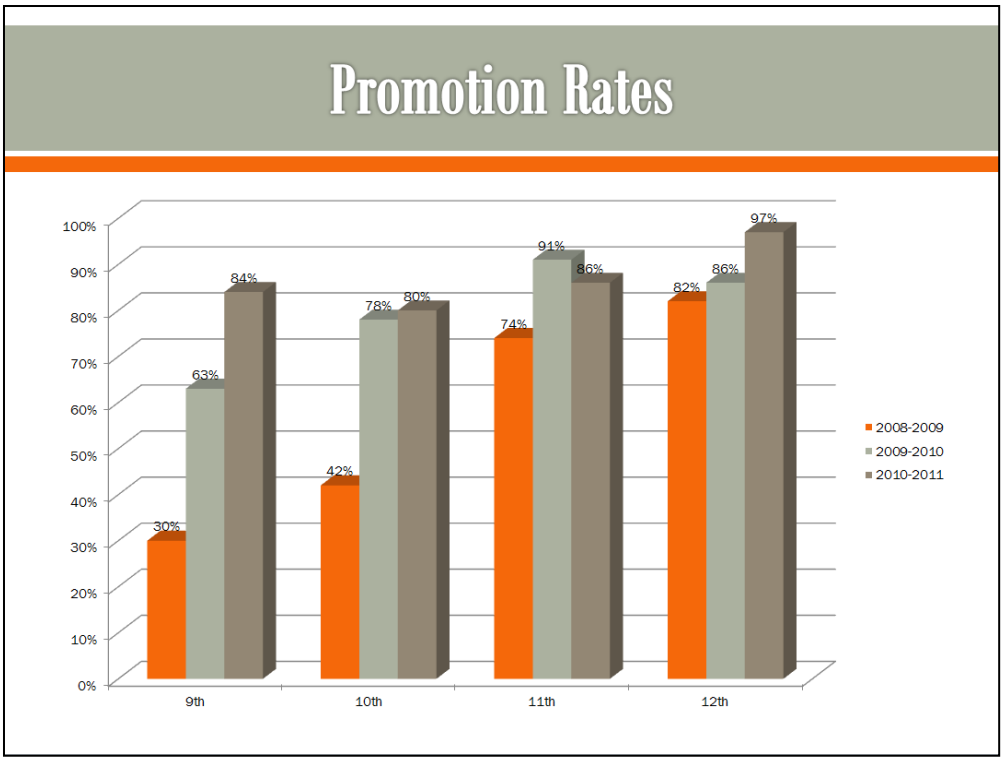

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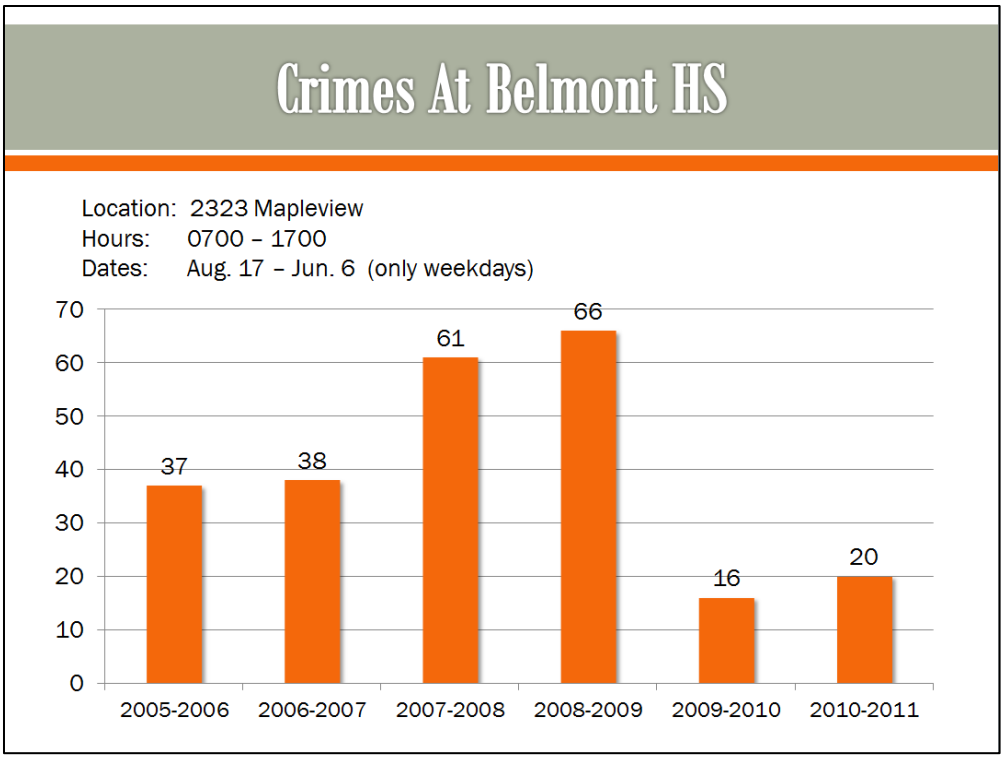

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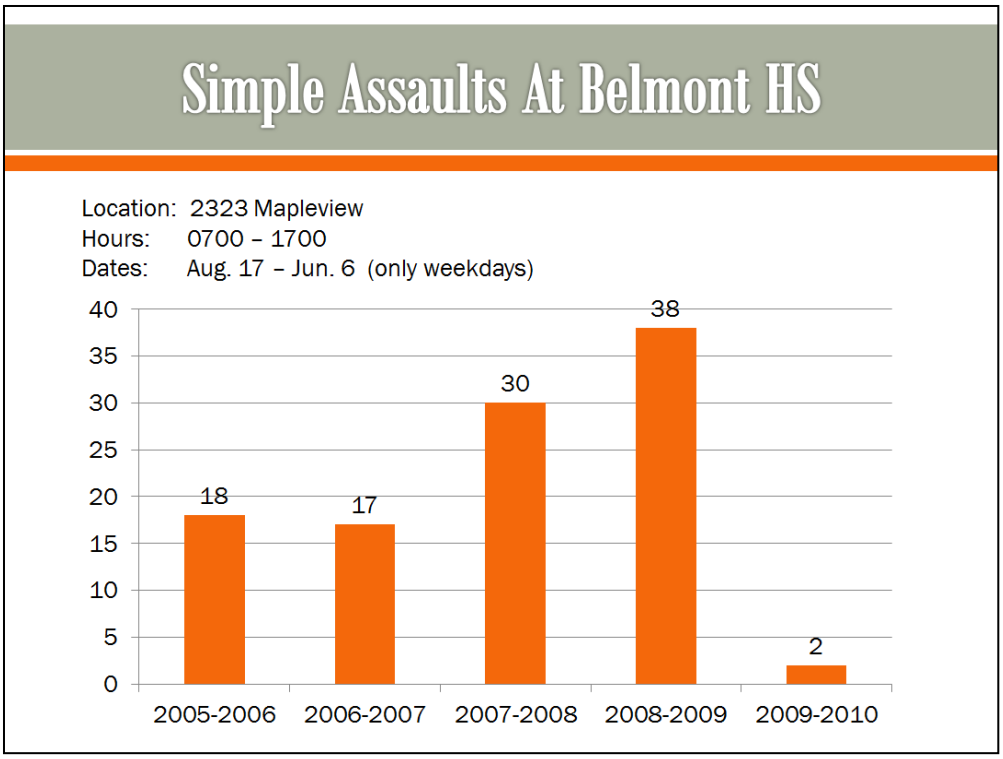

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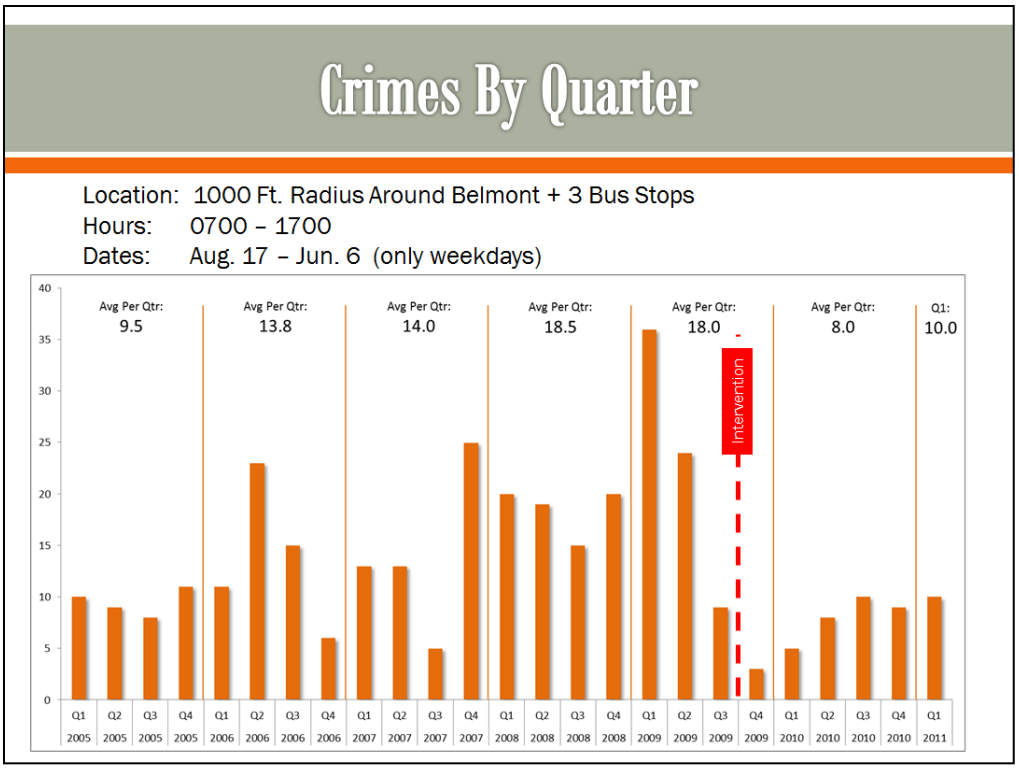

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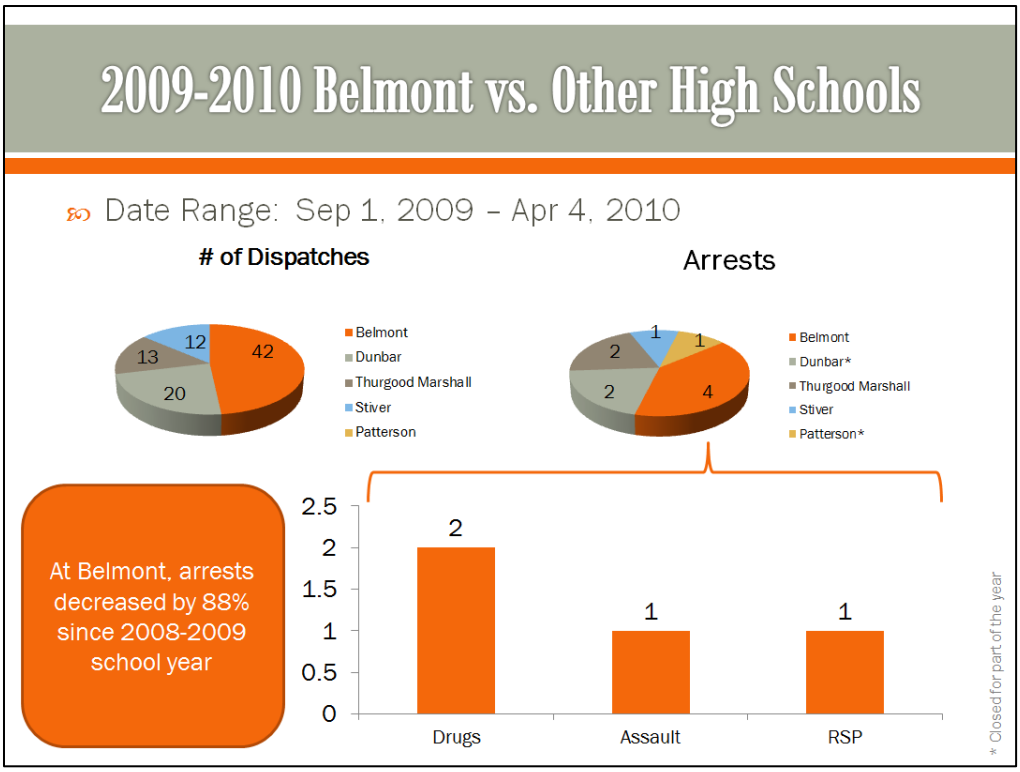

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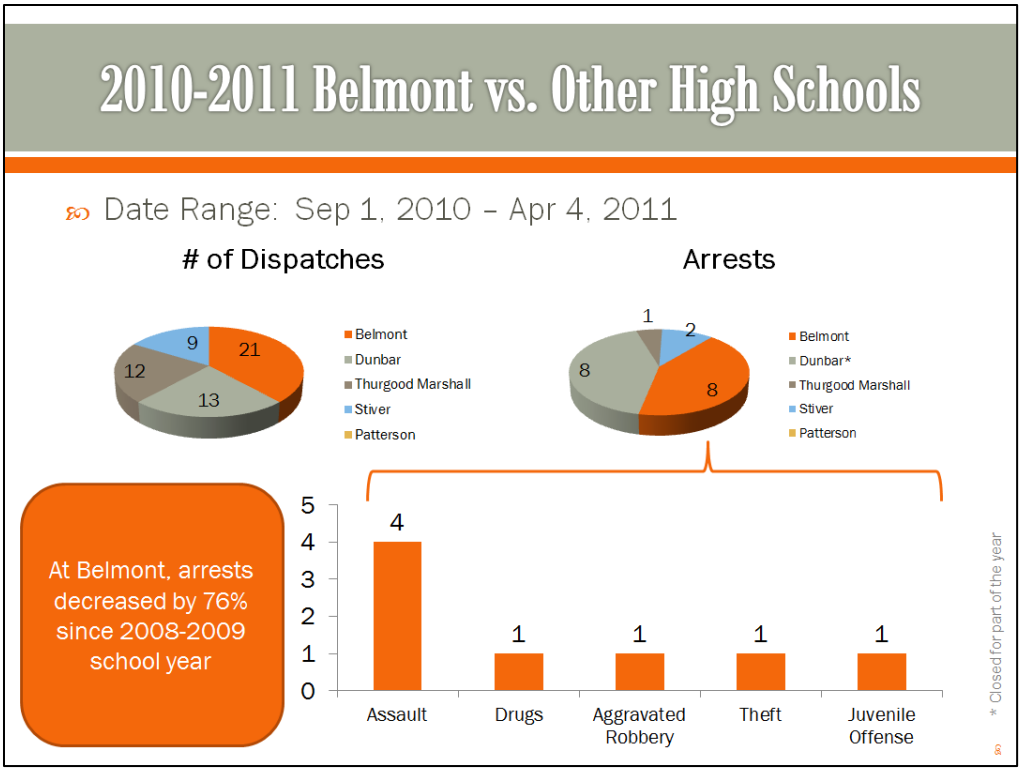

Figure 22: