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## More hearings ahead on school violence

By Kristen A. Graham  
Inquirer Staff Writer

Spurred by attacks against Asian students at South Philadelphia High School last month, the city's Commission on Human Relations will hold a series of public hearings on school violence, officials said yesterday.

Students, parents, faculty, police, and community members are invited to speak about their experiences and recommendations for fixes on violence motivated by race, ethnicity, sex, disability, or sexual orientation.

The first hearing is scheduled for 4 p.m. Jan. 28 at the Guerin Recreation Center at 16th and Jackson Streets in South Philadelphia. Language interpretation will be available.

Future hearings will be held about once a month. District officials likely will attend, said Rue Landau, the commission's executive director.

After the 11 hearings, to be held throughout the city, the commission will issue a report and recommendations to the Philadelphia School District. The report is expected by the end of the year, Landau said.

"We see these public hearings as part of our mission to diffuse conflict and intergroup tensions in the city," Landau said in a statement.

On Dec. 3, Asian students at South Philadelphia High were attacked by large groups of mostly African American students. Seven students required hospital treatment.

The South Philadelphia attack was just one episode in continuing violence against immigrants. A police investigation continues, as do a district-ordered probe by a retired federal judge and a new investigation by the state Commission on Human Relations. A federal civil-rights claim is also in the works.

Last month, the commission organized a meeting between district officials and advocates for the Asian students. Commission officials were also present at the school when a Justice Department program designed to help students bridge racial differences was implemented at South Philadelphia High.

Landau said that because the December incident was already being investigated, it was best that the commission focus on "building relationships."

The commission has long been working on issues of racial and ethnic violence around the district, she said, and many schools have succeeded at improving climates.

She said the hearings would be another step forward.

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"We've been working on this school by school, little by little, over the years," Landau said. "Let's look at what's working, what's not working, and make a diagram of how to move forward."

Further hearings will be announced shortly, officials said, on the commission's Web site at [www.phila.gov/humanrelations](http://www.phila.gov/humanrelations).

Contact staff writer Kristen Graham at 215-854-5146 or [kgraham@phillynews.com](mailto:kgraham@phillynews.com).

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