

— Thursday, May 4, 2006

Cops crack down at JFK High School

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Fiftieth Precinct Community Affairs Detective Luis Rodriguez said that he hasn't seen many reports coming in from Kennedy lately, but he added that not everything that happens at the school gets reported. And Five-O Youth Officer Elizabeth Perez cited gang activity as a possible catalyst for trouble, but she too was unperturbed, saying, "We get a little complaints here and there."

Principal Anthony Rotunno did not return phone calls for comment.

Most of the incidents are simply fights between two or more stu-

dents, but Meme Morales, a 15-year-old student, said that she hasn't heard of many fights inside the school. Not so said Megan Dillard, also 15, who said she sees about two fights a week. "That's normal for any high school," she added.

But violence inside the school isn't the only problem. Students and local residents say that violence outside the school has also become an issue. Meme said there are usually one or two fights a month outside Kennedy.

"A lot of violence around here," said George Rivera, who works at the Basic Collision garage, just north of the school. He said he's seen a

lot of fights taking place in the area — especially among the girls.

"It's more outside than inside," said Kennedy student Elizabeth Rodriguez, 15, who also agreed that fights regularly occur inside the school.

At Kennedy Deli, on nearby West 230th Street, the cashier, who would not give her name, said she hears the students as they organize themselves to go fight.

On April 28, Junior Santana, who helps the owners at the deli, said police officers from the school went outside to break up a fight that was brewing between Dominican and black students. And on

Monday, Sherry McLaughlin, the mother of a senior, said her son doesn't see fights often, but he had just told her about a scuffle in the building between two boys.

Earlier this year, on Jan. 12, a student was slashed in the back with a knife on West 231st Street, at 3:15 p.m. Kennedy McDonnell, who lives on Corlear Avenue one block north of the school, said this kind of behavior is not unusual.

In an interview after the January incident, he said teens loiter on the streets in the neighborhood and cause chaos by fighting and scrawling graffiti on stores and homes.

Elizabeth said that she has

heard of people hiding weapons outside of the school. On Jan. 19, a Corlear Avenue resident made a similar complaint at a Community Board 8 public safety committee meeting. The resident, who also did not want his name published, said that he personally found knives stashed in the bushes on West 230th Street and Corlear Avenue, although the 50th Precinct was unable to verify the claims.

On Sept. 29, nine teenagers were arrested after a riot erupted from what was supposed to have been a peaceful protest against the transfer of four guidance counselors from the school.