Funding is question as board ponders security at schools

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There is general agreement that security should be increased in schools, but no money has been found to pay for it.

Today the School Board will consider a well-regarded plan to beef up school security, but there is still a question as to whether the board has the money to fund it, according to Associate Superintendent Grady Hazel.

"I don't want to see the board in a position of, 'We all support it but we don't have the money,'" School Board member Hilda Randall said last week during committee discussion of the plan.

But a week later, Hazel said Randall's concern seems to be the case.

"We haven't been able to determine where there are funds for it yet," Hazel said, adding that the school staff is still working on the concept.

He said he did not expect a proposal for funding to be put forth today.

Deputy Superintendent Horace White, who has pushed the plan, said Wednesday that he will leave the question of funding to the school system's finance director.

White said he and Hazel have philosophical differences about the possibilities of funding the plan.

"It is as important as anything we do," White said. "You have to look at your priorities."

The staff's three-point plan includes:

• Creation of a two-person "rapid response team" to deal with discipline and security problems. Salaries would cost about $37,000 for this semester and $65,000 a year, excluding benefits.

• Creation of security committees at each school.

• Spending $6,000 for fences on 14 campuses.

White also wants permission to seek donations from the community.
munity to obtain vehicles and other equipment.

White asked for board permission to pursue grant money the Clinton Administration is expected to set aside to fight school violence.

The school staff hopes to obtain grants to fund a program that would ultimately eliminate lockers in some schools.

To eliminate the need for lockers, one set of textbooks would remain in the classroom for all students’ use and each student would have a separate textbook for the class they would keep at home.

Also, students would be required to carry notebooks and supplies in see-through knapsacks.