

Conference helps students address school safety issues

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The conference is devised to

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equip students and teachers with the knowledge and skills necessary to promote a safe, secure, and drug-free school environment, said Attorney General spokesman Michael Healey.

The event brings together young people of various backgrounds to work with educators, law-enforcement, counselors, and concerned parents to address issues related to school-based crime and violence, Healey said.

Students from more than 20 Rhode Island high schools and middle schools attended the event. Presenters included Lynch as well as former Third

Eye student participants, John Matteson with YCWA in Rhode Island, the Attorney General's crime-prevention specialist, Moses Saygbc, Coventry teacher Charles Blanchette and former Feinstein students Taylor Therrien and Nick Paiva.

Feinstein students have a lot to bring to a conference like Third Eye, said Blanchette. Since February, they have been using bully boxes and bully safe-rooms at the middle school, which bring unprecedented crime-prevention to the school, he says.

Bully boxes allow students to anonymously report in-

stances of bullying or crime in or outside of the school, according to Blanchette. Reports are automatically forwarded to School Resource Officer David Fraatz.

Since the installment of the bully boxes, "I have been able to prevent nine out of 10 fights that are reported here," Fraatz said.

The Feinstein kids are ideal to work with, Fraatz added. "I can only dream of setting up something like they have. You

have kids looking out for each other and the community — kids who want to make a change."

There was also a lot to learn at the event, students said.

"We've learned so much about how to make good and smart goals and leadership skills that are worth developing," said one student.

The past two days have also been eye-opening, another student added.

"We realize that we have a

lot in common with kids in Providence, even if we don't have exactly the same problems as them," said Alyssa Derrick, a sixth-grade student.

The biggest problems at the middle school are bullying, vandalism, a lack of respect, said Keisha Lawrence and Amber Dyer, two eighth-grade students.

"We want to encourage people to change," said Dyer. "By bettering youth, we'll better our community."