BOSTON — The new leader of Boston Public Schools said she is reevaluating the way the district handles incidents of bullying and violence. Superintendent Mary Skipper spoke at the Boston City Council Committee on Public Safety and Criminal Justice. She officially began her new role in late September.

The hearing was in response to a docket filed by City Councilor, At-Large Erin Murphy to, “assess and discuss how the Boston Public School Administration reports and responds to incidents of bullying and violence.”

At the beginning of the school year, 25 Investigates reported that BPS administrators failed to report violent incidents including a stabbing that occurred at Up Academy Charter School last May. The student’s grandmother told investigative reporter Ted Daniel the school notified family members but when she arrived, “the ambulance is nowhere to be found. No cops were called.”

Councilor Murphy cited several recent incidents of violence in and around Boston Schools including a stabbing at the Jeremiah E. Burke High School last month and said a report from the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education found that BPS does not ensure a safe environment for students. Murphy said some families are leaving BPS over concerns about safety.
City Councilor, At-Large Michael Flaherty echoed those concerns. He said families, “get totally frustrated, that they don’t think they’re getting heard and the problem continues to exist.” He spoke of one incident where a student was allowed to return to class just days after he, “tried to cut someone’s ear off.”

Both Council members said most of the issues pre-date Skipper’s arrival and they expressed their support for her.

Skipper said the impact of violence on the school community is devastating and she has been in contact with principals across the district to make sure all educators are trained to evaluate and support student safety concerns.

“We are reviewing everything as a team and we’re listening. We are examining what’s working for students and families and assessing what we need to do better,” she said.

The Council of the Great City Schools is currently conducting a safety audit of Boston Schools. A report with recommendations for safety improvements are expected to be released later next month.