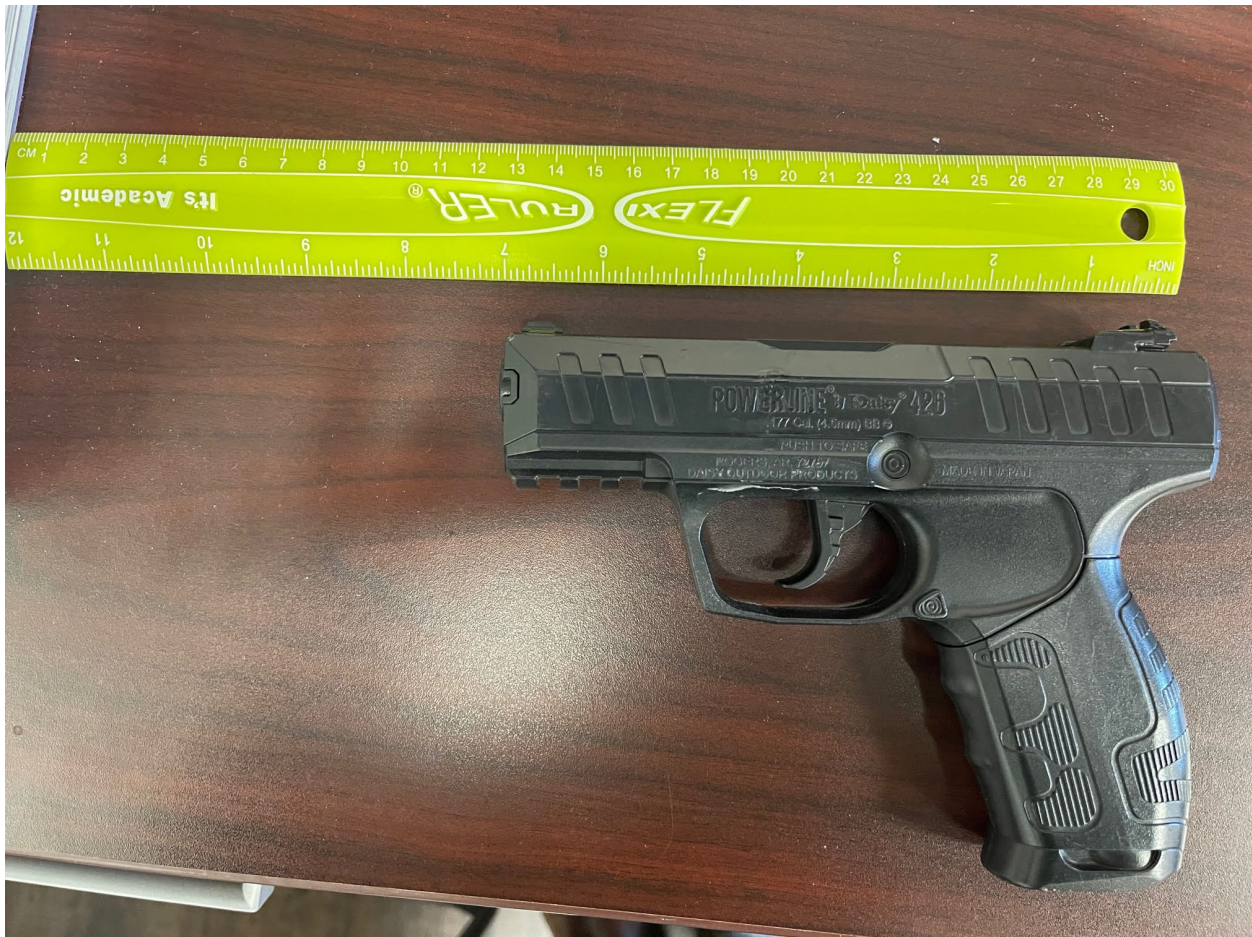


By Bill Husfelt

Superintendent, Bay District Schools



This is a BB gun. This looks like a real pistol. This has NO BUSINESS being at school but it was removed from a student just last week.

Parents/Guardians/Community members, we need your help! The disruptions at school due to disturbing comments, rumors of weapons, threatening social media posts and other concerns are at an all-time high. We need your help desperately because we can't solve these problems ourselves.

The "weapon" you see above was confiscated from a student at one of our high schools recently AFTER a school-wide lockdown was prompted by a social media post reported to Fortify Florida and law enforcement. It turns out that this weapon is actually a BB gun, but I want you to think with me for a minute:

What would we expect other students to do if they saw someone brandishing this at school?

What would we expect adults to do?

What would law enforcement do if they came upon a student waving this around?

What might a well-meaning citizen with a concealed weapons permit do?

I think we all know the answer to those questions. Unfortunately, it's possible that anyone listed above would view this as a weapon and would act accordingly ... which could have disastrous results. I don't want any student to lose his/her life for any reason, but I certainly don't want that to happen over a "toy."

We cannot have these items at school, and students who bring them face serious school-based and legal consequences. **But here's the thing, we don't GIVE THESE OUT AT SCHOOL!**

This item came from someone's home and was likely purchased by an adult. The student who brought **an actual weapon** to school last month (a different school) also brought it from home ... it belonged to his parents. Likewise, the students who bring knives, alcohol and THC-laden gummies to school also get them from home. Sadly, one elementary student brought those gummies on campus recently so that his parent wouldn't use them while he was at school.

All of this scares our students, and we know our community has had enough.

Parents/Guardians/Community members, please make sure you know the location of adult items you have purchased and regularly check your children's backpacks, cars and rooms to ensure they don't have access to things they shouldn't bring to school. We want to keep our students safe, and you play THE MOST critical role in that ... don't let these items come to school on your watch!

Locking down our schools while we investigate rumors/disturbing comments/the possible presence of weapons is terrifying for all involved, and we know that. Our students and educators get scared every single time, and we know those automated calls are frightening for the parents and guardians who receive them. We know our law enforcement officers are exhausted after chasing down rumor after rumor and responding to lockdown calls throughout the community and, quite frankly, it's all preventable.

We've talked to students through assemblies, videos, emails, the media and any other way we can, but it's time for the entire community to join us in this messaging. School is for academics and relationships with trusted adults, it's not for:

Weapons of any sort or toys that appear to be weapons

Vapes, dab pens

Drugs of any sort

Alcohol

Threatening comments

Violence

Vulgarity

Bullying

Please, please, please help us keep our schools as safe as possible by having these hard conversations with your students. I guarantee you that several parents in our community are shocked at the decisions their students made last week, and I am sure they all wish for different outcomes. So please be as

involved with your students as possible and keep checking up on them (and their stuff) so we can focus on academics at school.

Thank you, in advance, for taking this message as seriously as possible and for taking action that may literally save lives.

Stay safe, and God Bless!