



LARKSPUR MIDDLE SCHOOL

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STATEMENT FROM MATTHEW DELANEY, PRINCIPAL, LARKSPUR MIDDLE SCHOOL VIRGINIA BEACH CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

As a school principal, student safety is my number one priority. I was advised by the Virginia Beach Police Department Thursday, Sept. 12 that a passing motorist had seen a child with a gun chasing another child in the street near a Larkspur bus stop. Understandably, I became concerned and looked into the matter. Since police could not confirm whether the child got on a school bus it was imperative that I investigate the matter thoroughly to determine if a gun had been brought on school property.

In the course of the investigation, conducted in concert with a police officer and the school division Office of Safety and Loss Control, we identified the children who were firing pellet guns at each other and at people near the bus stop. Several students verified that they had been hit by pellets and had the marks to support their claims. In one instance, a child was only 10 feet from the bus stop and ran from the shots being fired but was still hit. Another student claimed to be shot in the back while running away during a previous incident Wednesday, Sept. 11. This child was also shot in the arm and head during Thursday's incident. I contacted the school division's Office of Student Leadership and School Board Legal Counsel for guidance. Because students were on their way to or at a school bus stop when they were struck by pellets, the school division has jurisdiction to take disciplinary actions against those students responsible for the disruption. There is an expectation that all students should be able to travel to and from school in the safest environment possible.

As the principal of Larkspur Middle School, I am responsible for the safety of students and will take all appropriate actions to ensure that the students using the pellet guns are appropriately disciplined and held responsible for their conduct. It is my sincere hope that they will learn important life lessons; the most important being that there will be consequences when they do things that can result in harm to another person. Given the opportunity, teachers, administrators and our entire community should always be willing to step forward to protect one another. This was a dangerous situation that involved the intervention of law enforcement, the Office of Safety and Loss Control and our school administration. I trust that parents and the public will support our actions which were taken with safety in mind.