

SCHOOL ON EAST SIDE

2nd-grader shoots his hand with gun he says he found

Tuesday, March 15, 2005

Evan Goodenow

THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

Chain-smoking as he waited for his son and nieces outside Leawood Elementary School, where a 7-year-old accidentally shot himself yesterday, Thomas Brooks voiced what every panicked parent was thinking.

"A .45-(caliber) pistol?" Brooks questioned. "How does a kid get a .45?"

Brooks, whose 12-year-old son, Terry, and two nieces, Darielle Bryant, 9, and Diamond Bryant, 7, attend the Columbus school on the East Side, was one of about 25 parents who took their children home after the shooting.

Meanwhile, Farland M. Dindy was released from Children's Hospital yesterday afternoon after shooting himself in the left hand with a Hi-Point .45-caliber semiautomatic pistol.

Farland told Columbus police that he found the gun as he walked to school yesterday morning. His home on Elaine Road is about a quarter-mile from the school at 1677 S. Hamilton Rd. Police are investigating where the boy got the gun.

Those at the boy's home declined to comment last night, but Farland's uncle William Barnett, who lives in the apartment above, said no one in the family owns a pistol.

Barnett said he thinks it's possible his nephew found the gun. In the neighborhood, "teenagers are shooting all the time," he said. Elaine Road is home to the Elaine Crips gang, authorities said.

The shooting occurred about 9 a.m. in the second-grade classroom of teacher Tessa M. Ellis.

Students had just returned from breakfast in the cafeteria when they heard a bang from the coat room.

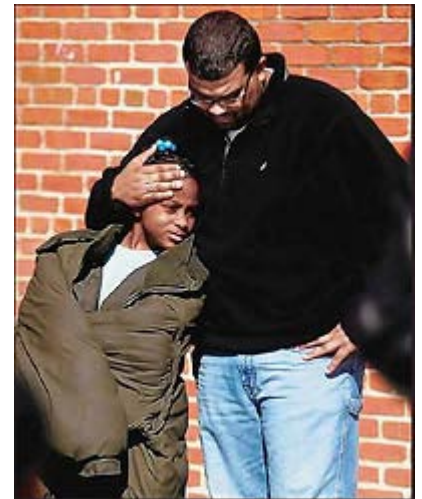
Farland apparently fired the pistol from inside his backpack, Sgt. David A. Sicilian II said. As paramedics and police raced to the school, administrators locked children into rooms.

Students were released individually to anxious parents who came to the school.

"As I walked past to get my breakfast, I saw blood on the ground and Miss Ellis crying," said Domonique Thompson, 10, after he left the school.

Outside, Ellis hugged children and comforted parents.

"He's not a mean child," she said of Farland to a parent.



CHRIS RUSSELL |
DISPATCH

Teacher's assistant Greg Waddell comforts student Brittani Palmer after a second-grade boy shot himself.

Superintendent Gene Harris visited the boy at Children's Hospital. She said schools should not be blamed for adults who fail to secure guns.

"We could be in a situation where we were standing here talking to you today about the death of a child," Harris said.

Farland could face a year's expulsion for having the gun.

State records show that districtwide, 17 Columbus students were expelled for bringing guns to school in the past school year and 100 were suspended.

Guns in schools are not a problem unique to Columbus. Last month, a South-Western kindergartner was found with a loaded .380-caliber semiautomatic pistol on a bus. His mother was charged with child endangering because the gun came from their home.

Leawood Principal Jill Lausch sent a letter home to parents yesterday, urging them to talk to their children about gun safety.

"Our priority is to keep our school, students and staff safe," Lausch wrote. "The best security is everyone working together to help maintain a positive learning environment."

Though classes continued after the shooting, Bryan Hill thought his two daughters and one son had had enough.

"I wouldn't have one in my house," Hill said of guns.

Then he put his arms around his children and slowly walked them home.

Dispatch reporters Bill Bush and Jennifer Smith Richards contributed to this article.

egoodenow@dispatch.com?