

## Student with pellet gun causes 3-hour lockdown

**Boy, 15, arrested at Vaughan Road Academy was 'goofing around,' now faces weapons charges**

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STAFF REPORTER

A 15-year-old student brought a pellet gun into the cafeteria at Vaughan Road Academy yesterday, forcing a three-hour lockdown.

No injuries were reported and a Toronto public school board official said the student was essentially "goofing around."

The male student was arrested by Toronto police and faces charges for weapons and mischief, police said.

He is scheduled to appear in court this morning.

"It wasn't like he was out to get somebody – we have no indication of that," said Jeff Hainbuch, superintendent of the west Toronto school, located west of the intersection of Bathurst St. and St. Clair Ave. W.

The incident, which took place around 10:40 a.m., comes a week after a stinging report by the School Community Safety Advisory Panel found violence, sexual harassment and sexual assault are prevalent in Toronto public schools.

The report also criticized the Toronto District School Board for its inability to ensure students' safety at school.

The panel's data on gun incidents in Toronto schools, from January 2006 to November 2007, show that pellet and BB guns and air pistols are just as much a problem as real guns.

In fact, there were more incidents reported on school property with pellet and BB guns than real ones during that time period.

But their threat is just as real.

Such weapons can cause serious injuries – they are capable of penetrating skin, eyes, internal organs and bone – as well as long-term disability, reports the journal, *Pediatrics*.

High-velocity models can cause fatalities.

"Non-powder guns (BB guns, pellet guns, air rifles, paintball guns) are weapons and should never be characterized as toys," says a November 2004 online article.

The school's superintendent said students did not seem worried and many stayed at school after the lockdown was lifted around 1:30 p.m.

"If they didn't feel it was a safe place, I think they would get out as soon as possible," Hainbuch said.

He added that students would take home a letter explaining yesterday's events to their parents.

Vaughan Road Academy, a public high school, has about 800 students and staff, with many students in the International Baccalaureate program.

*With files from Josh Wingrove and Kristin Rushowy*