



SAVE survey featured on the front page of USA Today on April 11, 2002

Teens More Likely to Report Threats - By Tamara Henry, USA TODAY, April 11, 2002

Today's teens, fed up with random student shootings and pervasive fear on school campuses, are increasingly likely to report peers who carry weapons or plan violence, says a new report.

Eighty-one percent of teens surveyed by the Opinion Research Corp. International say they are more willing than in the past to report students if they believe that there is a threat to school safety. Only 26% say they would tell a parent if they learned of a school violence threat that they thought was real, but 43% would turn to a teacher and 42% to a principal.

Students Against Violence Everywhere (SAVE), a group based in Raleigh, N.C., with 88,000 student members, mainly in schools and youth clubs, commissioned the survey of 501 teens Feb. 28-March 4. The margin of error was +/- 4 percentage points.

Results are to be released at a teen summit Saturday — one week before the third anniversary of the Columbine High School shootings. On April 20, 1999, two teens fatally shot 12 students and a teacher before killing themselves at the Colorado school.

"It doesn't surprise me, but it gratifies me" that students are more willing to break the "code of silence," says Bill Bond, former principal of a high school in West Paducah, Ky., where a 14-year-old killed three students Dec. 1, 1997.

He now travels the country for the National Association of Secondary School Principals to work on school safety with administrators. His advice to principals? Make yourself accessible and make students key players. He says the personal relationships a principal builds with students are better protection than metal detectors.

Five days before the fatal shootings at Paducah, "I know eight kids that saw the gun. Not one single one of them told. They didn't want to get him in trouble."

The student, Michael Carneal, was sentenced to life in prison with no chance for parole for at least 25 years.

Randy Jensen, principal of William Thomas Middle School in American Falls, Idaho, says any student caught with a weapon in his school district automatically goes before an expulsion hearing. "We really try to impress on our students they are really doing someone a favor" by reporting weapons.

The survey also found that after Columbine, schools are using a balance of physical and non-physical measures to curb violence:

- 50% of teens surveyed say they go to more school assemblies on violence, anti-bullying and similar themes.
- 49% note the addition of on-campus police or security officers.
- 49% say conflict resolution is taught in classes.
- 47% note more physical security at school.

"Schools are still safe places, but we have to do more to provide that continued level of safety," says Pam Riley, SAVE's executive director. "We don't want to turn schools into prisons, but we do want to provide that level of comfort."