

Columbine effect: How did attack change schools?

Violent behavior doesn't seem to have fallen, but security is much tighter

Sunday, April 19, 2009 3:49 AM

BY JENNIFER SMITH RICHARDS

THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

There are cameras on school buses, monitors in hallways, police officers on campus and name badges for everyone.

Still, it's hard to say whether central Ohio schools are any safer or less violent than they were a decade ago, before the massacre at Columbine High School changed how Americans think about school safety. Monday is the 10-year anniversary of the tragedy, which claimed the lives of 12 students, a teacher and the two shooters in Colorado.

Schools do track student discipline. Because of that, we know that more Franklin County students were disciplined for violence and weapons last school year than in any of the previous eight years. (State data are available only through 2000-01.)

But the trend line is not consistent. And there's no way to know whether last year's jump in cases is the result of more violence or more vigilance.

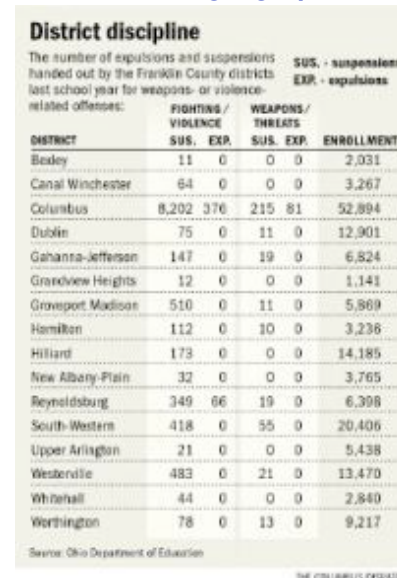
"Anecdotally, we've continued to see more aggressive behavior, more discipline issues and certainly no lack of serious incidents in schools around the country," said Kenneth Trump, a Cleveland-based school-security expert. "By no means have these problems gone away. There remains a level of vulnerability, and the momentum that was there on school safety in the two years after Columbine has, with each year, lost a little bit more energy."

Several local districts had record highs last school year. Columbus, the state's largest district, had its most expulsions for carrying guns (64). Suspensions for fighting in Gahanna-Jefferson hit a high (147), and disruptive behavior in Worthington peaked (178).

State and federal discipline-tracking systems rely on schools to honestly report and categorize each suspension, expulsion and long-term detention. But most experts say that such data are grossly underreported.



[Click to enlarge graphic](#)



[Click to enlarge graphic](#)

More coverage

- [Columbine fades](#)

©2009, The Columbus Dispatch, Reproduction prohibited