

**More and more schools  
are trying to spot the  
potential killers in their  
midst. But what about  
the innocents?**

# **LOOKING FOR TROUBLE**

# ONE YEAR LATER: CAN WE PREVENT ANOTHER COLUMBINE?

By JODIE MORSE LOS ANGELES

**T**HE GRADE-SCHOOL DRAWING looked typically innocent, at least in its style. The subjects were two stick figures, one of them wearing a loopy smile. But the teacher in San Bernardino, Calif., who found it stowed in a student's desk was alarmed by the story line. One grinning stick figure wielded a gun. The other, frowning, had just been shot.

The sketch, from the hand of an eight-year-old with a penchant for nasty temper tantrums, was drawn only days after a six-year-old in Michigan fatally shot a classmate, so school officials decided to be on the safe side.

They brought the drawing to the attention of Gary Underwood, chief of police for the city's public schools, who ran the child's case through the department's new computer "threat-assessment" program, called Mosaic-2000. With a battery of 42 questions—Is the student harassed by peers? Has the student recently experienced rejection?—Mosaic purports to calculate rough odds on whether a child will turn violent.

Long used by law-enforcement and government agencies to examine threats made against their personnel, Mosaic software is now being field-tested in about 20 public school districts from Jonesboro, Ark., to Los Angeles to Salem, Ore. In its assessment of the stick-figure artist, the program suggested that the boy shared several traits with past violent offenders and guided the school to put him in counseling and under close watch. "When those kids walked into Columbine with bombs, no one was expecting it," says Underwood. "We're now on alert if this child comes into school with a bulge in his pocket."

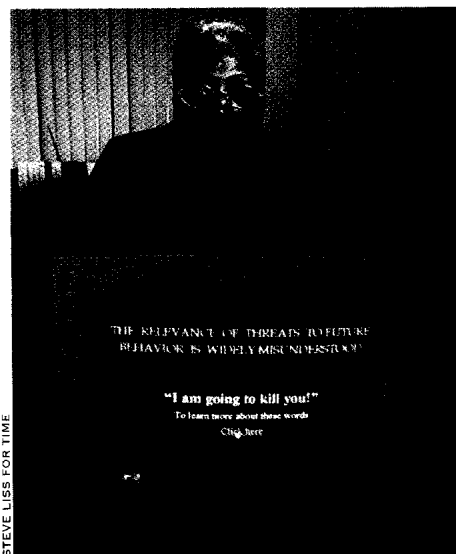
This is the level of vigilance in the American public school a year after Columbine. On average, it may be a safer place than ever—the number of school-associated violent deaths dropped 40% from 1997 through 1999—but it feels scarier with each new well-publicized shooting and threat. In the year since the Columbine massacre, understandably nervous school officials have cycled through a series of responses, from lock-down drills to see-through knapsacks, with the impulsiveness of seventh-graders buying the boy-band CD of the moment.

Now, though, administrators are quietly shifting their sights from metal detectors to "mental detec-



The mastermind of Mosaic says it helps schools assess threats

AVERY HELM



PHYLLIS HODGES The assistant principal runs the program at a Chicago high school

tors." Commonly known as profilers, these programs aim to detect violence-prone kids before they act by comparing them to those who have already snapped. Investigators from Columbine and Jonesboro have tutored administrators across the U.S. on the telltale signs that in their cases went tragically undetected or unheeded. The FBI, which last fall circulated a 20-point "offender profile" culled from common characteristics of school shooters, will release a report on the topic next month. And the Secret Service, at work on its own study, is interviewing school shooters to see what makes them tick—and

## SOME OF THE TRAITS

... the FBI says may help identify a kid at risk of committing violence

- ☒ **RED FLAG** Experiences an event, like rejection by girlfriend, that leads to depression, thoughts of suicide and killing **WHO FITS** Barry Loukaitis, Moses Lake, Wash.; Luke Woodham, Pearl, Miss.; Michael Carneal, West Paducah, Ken.; Andrew Golden and Mitchell Johnson, Jonesboro, Ark.; Kipland Kinkel, Springfield, Ore.; Eric Harris, Dylan Klebold, Littleton, Colo.; Thomas Solomon, Conyers, Ga.
- ☒ **RED FLAG** Has a history of mental health treatment **WHO FITS** Loukaitis, Carneal, Kinkel, Harris, Solomon
- ☒ **RED FLAG** Tends to dislike popular students or those who bully others **WHO FITS** Loukaitis, Harris, Klebold, Solomon
- ☒ **RED FLAG** Openly expresses a desire to kill others **WHO FITS** Loukaitis, Carneal, Golden, Johnson, Kinkel, Harris, Klebold, Solomon
- ☒ **RED FLAG** Is cruel to animals, sets fires, wets bed beyond normal age **WHO FITS** Woodham, Johnson, Kinkel
- ☒ **RED FLAG** Is fascinated by firearms and has access, usually through a family member **WHO FITS** Loukaitis, Woodham, Carneal, Golden, Johnson, Kinkel, Harris, Klebold, Solomon

then explode.

Along with its findings, the Secret Service plans to give schools an instructional video and a set of probative questions. In addition, numerous questionnaires and checklists are being sold by private firms or drawn up by school officials themselves. One screening test for students is titled simply "Questions for Killers."

Support for the trouble-spotting approach is growing. Proponents contend it has systematically helped nail would-be

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assassins and mass killers in other settings. In a new poll by TIME and the Discovery Channel, 53% of parents surveyed said they approve of such measures. But their kids are leery: 60% said they disapprove, fearing such programs could be used unfairly against students not prone to violence. A growing number of critics agree, contending that there is simply no reliable way to weed out the world's Dylans and Erics from their merely cranky classmates without trampling on privacy and constitutional rights in the process. "These programs treat children as suspects, not students," says Barry Steinhardt, associate director of the American Civil Liberties Union.

Front and center in the debate is the controversial Mosaic-2000 program. Its creator, Gavin de Becker, 45, a Hollywood security consultant and author of the best-selling self-help book *The Gift of Fear*, works out of a windowless Los Angeles office festooned with gushing thanks from the likes of Goldie Hawn, Robert Redford—and the CIA. This last client speaks to de Becker's lesser-known line of work. For the past decade he has dispensed "artificial-intuition" software to police departments, Governors and even the U.S. Supreme Court. The programs rank numerically the danger posed by celebrity stalkers, angry employees or potential assassins by comparing their actions to those of known offenders.

A similar logic drives the new school-house version of Mosaic. First, a child acts in a manner considered threatening—he

draws a worrisome sketch or strikes another student. Then, out of the child's presence and without his or her knowledge, school psychologists, principals or police answer a list of multiple-choice questions drafted by de Becker and a committee including law-enforcement and education officials. (Sample queries: What is the student's demeanor toward authority figures? Has there recently been media attention to school shootings or other acts of violence? What is the student's home-life situation?) If the responses seem particularly troubling, a "trigger text" immediately pops up, prompting officials to contact law-enforcement or mental-health professionals. At the end of the exercise, the program computes whether the student has "few," "several" or "some" factors in common with violent perpetrators and a detailed report is printed out.

"Schools are doing all this same stuff anyway, but they're doing it willy-nilly," says de Becker. "Mosaic will give them the participation of experts in those high-stakes decisions." Those experts, however, remain a fiercely divided bunch. While some main-

tain that school shootings are simply too rare for sound comparisons to be drawn, others who have studied the case histories have found that the shooters share many key traits. "There's no one set of characteristics that can be ascribed to these shooters," cautions Bryan Vossekuil, who is leading the

holds  
a photo of  
her son  
John, 13,  
shot dead  
by a young  
neighbor

RON HOLZ FOR TIME

### SURVEY: YOUTH VIOLENCE

## THE PERCEPTION GAP

**A** YEAR AFTER COLUMBINE, parents and teenagers hold strikingly different views on the problem of youth violence, according to a new poll by TIME and the Discovery Channel in conjunction with the National Campaign Against Youth Violence. Fewer teens feel very safe from violence in schools today (33%) than shortly after the Columbine killings a year ago (42% in a similar poll). But more parents believe that teens feel safe in school today (45%) than felt that way last year (27%). Nearly a third of

teens say they have witnessed a violent situation at school, while only 8% of parents think that's the case. About half of teens in the poll say they have been insulted or threatened in the past year, but only 22% of parents believe their kids have experienced that type of situation.

While 8 in 10 parents say they have talked with their kids about ways to protect themselves from violence, only 6 in 10 kids remember having such conversations. And while about half of parents wish they could talk more

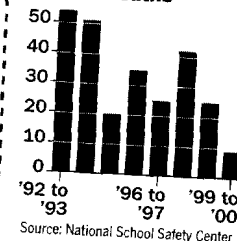
with their kids about this subject, only 18% of teens want more such talks. One reason may be that most parents encourage kids to stand up for themselves, while most kids are worried about the possible violent consequences. Two-thirds of parents believe it is nearly impossible for teens to walk away from an angry confrontation without being teased, but only 37% of teens agree. Both parents and teens believe that youth violence has increased in recent years, even though school-related violent deaths have been in decline. Extensive news coverage of school shootings may account for this misperception.

Discovery  
CHANNEL  
**POLL**

■ Overall, do you think that in the past few years youth violence has increased, decreased or stayed about the same?

TEENS PARENTS  
Increased . . . **70%** . . . **59%**  
Decreased . . . **7%** . . . **1%**  
Stayed about the same . . . **23%** . . . **40%**

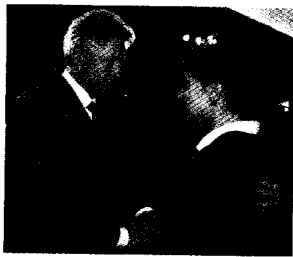
Actual incidents of school-associated violent deaths



# MOMS FOR GUN CONTROL

If there were a recipe for creating a late-blooming activist—take a devoted parent, add a worst nightmare, mix with official intransigence—Carole Price, 37, would be the final product. The Maryland mother of three says she “hadn’t organized anything more complicated than a car pool” until gun violence ripped into her family. On Aug. 20, 1998, Price’s son John, 13, was accidentally killed by a 9-year-old neighbor boy wielding a 9-mm Luger pistol that he had found in his home. Since that day, Price and her husband John have put themselves on the front lines of the war over gun safety.

After her son was killed, Carole Price was stunned to learn that in Maryland it was only a misdemeanor to leave



THE ACTIVIST Price, right, with Clinton last week

a loaded gun accessible to a child. She started attending gun-control rallies and was host at meetings in her home. After she showed up with a TV news crew at a local Republican fund raiser that was raffling off a 9-mm handgun, Price gained the attention of other local media and legislators.

Her testimony before

the Maryland legislature helped push through a new law that requires trigger locks and a firearms-safety course for all new handgun owners. When the measure was signed into law last week, President Clinton traveled to Annapolis to praise the Prices’ efforts.

Since November, Carol Price has been an organizer of the Million Mom March on behalf of “commonsense” gun control, scheduled for Mother’s Day on the Mall in Washington. Donna Dees Thomases, the New Jersey publicist and mother of two who launched plans for the march, says that Price’s public anguish speaks for thousands of families branded by gun violence—and furious at legislative inaction.

—By Amy Dickinson/Washington

America’s schools to create an open experiment.” De Becker says his method is scheduled to undergo two academic evaluations.

Many civil libertarians have a more pressing concern. They fear the program will single out or profile students who are simply maladjusted but not menacing. And because schools use Mosaic to study kids without their knowledge, they may never know they are under suspicion. De Becker says Mosaic is not used for what he calls “the p word”—profiling—but rather for “threat assessment.” Students, he says, are not examined unless they single themselves out by making a threat. But in today’s anxious classrooms, threats are often defined broadly. Phyllis Hodges, an assistant principal at Chicago’s Von Steuben High School, used the program to examine a student who was constantly picked on by peers for being effeminate. He had made disturbing comments in the past—for example, he vowed he would hurt classmates—yet his offense this time was less clear-cut. He refused to hand in a test after his teacher called time. A run of his particulars through the Mosaic program indicated there was no immediate cause for concern.

Better that result, de Becker contends, than the more haphazard approach of a school district like Granite City, Ill., which has hand-crafted its own profiling policy. Students who exhibit certain risky behaviors—cursing, mood swings, writing about “the dark side of life”—can face expulsion or worse. In December, teachers in Granite City found a note by a student promising to “settle some scores.” He was read his

Secret Service’s ongoing study. Perhaps the agency’s most interesting finding so far is that the shooters rarely made public threats. Instead, they tended to confide their intentions to a few select peers.

There are more specific challenges to Mosaic’s pedigree. The U.S. Marshals Ser-

vice and the L.A. police department may swear by the earlier versions of Mosaic, but many psychologists insist it has not been through a proper scholarly review. Mike Furlong, a psychologist at the University of California at Santa Barbara, recently test-drove the Mosaic-2000 program and concluded, “This is just a private firm asking

■ Do you feel safe from violence at school? TEENS  
Very safe . . . . .33%  
Somewhat safe .53%  
Not too safe. . . . .9%  
Not safe at all . . .5%

■ Biggest problem in school:

ACCORDING TO TEENS  
Drugs . . . . .32%  
Violence . . . . .14%  
Other . . . . .8%  
Discipline problems . . . . .4%  
Peer pressure . . .4%

ACCORDING TO PARENTS  
Drugs . . . . .25%  
Lack of good teachers . . . . .15%  
Other . . . . .12%  
Lack of good education/college prep. . . . .9%  
Violence . . . . .7%

What are the most important solutions to reducing youth violence, both in and out of schools?

ACCORDING TO TEENS

More counseling services in school . . . . .15%  
Teaching people not to hate . . . . .14%  
Mentoring programs . . . . .11%  
More police in schools . . . . .10%  
More afterschool programs . . . . .10%

ACCORDING TO PARENTS

More counseling services in school . . . . .26%  
Better identification of emotional problems in kids . . . . .20%  
Teaching people not to hate . . . . .14%  
Getting drugs out of schools . . . . .12%  
More recreational opportunities for kids . . . . .10%

■ Do you agree or disagree that by the time students with emotional and behavioral problems are 16 or 17, it is too late to change their behavior?

	TEENS	PARENTS
Agree . . . . .	29%	61%
Disagree . . . . .	69%	38%

From a Discovery Channel/TIME poll of 400 American teenagers 14 to 17, 400 parents of teenagers and 200 adults without teenage children taken in April by Penn, Schoen & Berland

■ Which one of the following groups do you think would have the greatest impact on kids in the effort to reduce violence in schools?

	TEENS
Parents/guardians . . . . .	37%
Celebrities . . . . .	19%
Media . . . . .	13%
Support groups . . . . .	13%
Teachers and school officials . . . . .	6%

	PARENTS
Parents/guardians . . . . .	68%
Support groups . . . . .	7%
Teachers and school officials . . . . .	6%
Police . . . . .	5%
Media . . . . .	2%
Religious organizations . . . . .	2%

■ If you or your teenager had an idea but were not completely sure, that another student might do something violent, whom would you tell?

	TEENS	PARENTS
A teacher . . . . .	26%	3%
A parent . . . . .	18%	61%
A guidance counselor . . . . .	16%	1%
No one . . . . .	15%	18%

■ Do you agree or disagree that it is almost impossible to walk away from an angry scene without fighting and not be teased for it?

	TEENS	PARENTS
Strongly Agree . . . . .	13%	53%
Somewhat Agree . . . . .	24%	12%
Somewhat disagree . . . . .	24%	15%
Strongly disagree . . . . .	35%	19%

■ Do you think the way the media portray violence is a major factor in causing youth violence?

	TEENS	PARENTS
Yes . . . . .	38%	59%
No . . . . .	60%	41%

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Miranda warning, arrested by the city police and suspended for 10 days. In the meantime, teachers investigating the matter found that the note was only the concoction, as superintendent Steve Balen puts it, "of a goofy freshman having fun."

Tales like that have begun to sway some policymakers. Last week the office of California Governor Gray Davis issued a report urging schools to proceed with caution on Mosaic, and other such programs. The U.S. Education Department is backing away from the checklist of warning signs it sent to every school in the nation in 1998. In a mass mailing this week, the department declares that relying on such lists can "harm children and waste resources." Instead, it counsels teachers and parents to use the much lower-tech and more labor-intensive approach of keeping their eyes and



JEFFREY LOWE FOR TIME  
**RAUL RAMIREZ** In Salem, Ore., the sheriff runs Mosaic

ears alert at all times, not only for overt threats but also for troubled students who need help.

That method seemed to do the trick last week in Lake Station, Ind., where a

parent's call helped school officials head off an alleged plot by three first-grade girls to kill a classmate. "The answer is not going to come from just throwing something up on the computer," says Bill Modzeleski, head of the government's school-safety programs. "It's got to come from the teachers in classrooms who really know the problem kids."

Or there's the all-of-the-above approach embraced by schools in a district like Carroll County, Md. In the past year, they have adopted 25 safety initiatives, including a "red flags" profile of their own design. "The threats are way down, and the kids are learning," reports the director of pupil services, Cynthia Little. "They've even stopped saying 'I'm going to kill you.'" But have they stopped thinking it?

—With reporting by

Elaine Shannon/Washington

## POLICE PREPARATIONS

### READY AND WAITING

**P**OLICE DETECTIVE BRIAN Braswell of Petersburg, Va., thinks he's "three-quarters" prepared for the next Columbine. Last month, the local high school was the stage for a hostage drill complete with blaring fire alarms, 60 kids from Junior ROTC playing the wounded and scared, and an officer portraying a revenge-seeking killer, firing blanks from a shotgun. Braswell's team of officers had to push through waves of fleeing, panicked students and step over wounded children tugging at their pant legs crying "Help me!" Says Braswell: "From Columbine, we've learned that you have no choice but to go in and stop the carnage."

A year after a tragedy that left 15 dead—and scores of questions about why the police moved so slowly—crisis training that was once reserved for big-city SWAT teams has entered the curriculum for street cops. The Los Angeles police hope to

have 5,000 patrol officers trained in rapid-deployment techniques by June. The National Tactical Officers Association, a SWAT training organization, has put more than 1,000 officers through "R.U. Ready High School" in Moyock, N.C., a \$45,000 facility specifically built to simulate Columbine-style carnage. A school-hostage drill in Pinellas County, Fla., last month featured 600 middle schoolers hiding inside locked-down classrooms. It was enough to make baby-boomer parents long for the good old days of duck-and-cover.

The old rules on how to respond to school and office shootings—set up a perimeter and wait for SWAT—are gone. Now cops are trained that when they hear shooting, they should go in immediately, guns drawn, and stop the violence. "We had to make a change," says SWAT trainer Randy Watt. "Fifteen years ago, you didn't see people going in just for the sake of creating mayhem and



FRED VICTORIN—ST. PETERSBURG TIMES

**ONLY A DRILL** Pinellas County police prepare for Columbine II planning their own demise."

During the Petersburg drill, several cops blinked back tears when they had to step over injured kids. "All your instincts tell you to help them," says Detective Braswell, a father of two. "But I understand what needs to be done." Some agencies have armed their patrol officers with rifles and equipped patrol cars with computers that can quickly call up school blueprints.

Would any of this have

helped at Columbine, where patrolmen waited outside the school for later-arriving SWAT teams rather than barging inside to confront the gunmen? Colorado Governor Bill Owens told *TIME* that he thinks those slow and deliberate tactics were probably inappropriate and will be assessed by his Columbine Review Commission. But most departments aren't waiting for more studies—rapid deployment is the order of the day. —By Andrew Goldstein