

Lake Fenton Community Schools

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Lake Fenton Families:

This comes to you today not only as the superintendent, but also as the mother of four daughters.

Over the last two weeks, we have been working in cooperation with the Genesee County Sheriff's Department and did not want to jeopardize their investigation by sending this letter to our families any sooner than today.

During this time, we have dealt with a number of social media concerns which did not necessarily involve the school, but were brought to our attention due to the nature of the interactions taking place. We are finding an alarming number of our students are connected to individuals, via social media, who are significantly older and have absolutely no ties to our schools or community. In each instance, we have worked with the Genesee County Sheriff's Department and cooperated with any investigation needed. In addition, we have had conversations with multiple students and their families to alert them to the concerns.

Unfortunately, we live in an age where predators can easily connect with our children through a variety of social media outlets. I cannot stress to you enough the importance of knowing who your children are connected with on social media. Having raised four daughters, I know kids need some level of privacy, but when it comes to their safety, some things are just not negotiable.

I know we would like to think our children would never be compromised on social media, but those platforms have no boundaries. Please talk with your children about chat rooms, gaming and all the other social media applications out there. We teach our students not to give out personal information on these platforms, but we have seen evidence they still continue to do so.

When I look around our district, I can see we have spent tens of thousands of dollars to improve the safety and security of our schools, but this is one of those areas we cannot protect with a locking device or access control system. Together, we must continue to express to our children how important it is to exercise caution when using social media.

On Thursday, March 5th, Lake Fenton Community Schools will be hosting a community event on Human Trafficking and grooming behaviors. We will be showing the film *Ring of Silence* which shows how children can easily be pulled into a human trafficking ring. The film contains mature content. In addition, we are working to have a representative here from the Michigan Human Trafficking Task Force to provide additional information and answer questions. All parents are encouraged to attend. If you have a high school student, we strongly recommend they attend with you. The event will begin promptly at 6:30 p.m. in the high school auditorium.

Sincerely,
Julie Williams

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