

March 15, 2013

Dear Parents/Guardians,

The PHS community has recently experienced cyber bullying from an anonymous Twitter account. Administration responded quickly to investigate and secured support and assistance from Montgomery County Police. The police came to campus to follow up on leads administration and staff provided. MCPS cyber security team is also investigating. Unfortunately, the negative use of social media has surfaced in other MCPS high schools recently. I have been speaking with principals to see how they are dealing with these same scenarios in their schools. We are tackling an issue that is very new to us; fortunately, resources and guidelines are available to help us navigate this new terrain.

I am happy to report that many PHS students came forward to report their disappointment and unhappiness with the postings. In fact, prompt student action helped extinguish some of the hurtful chatter. Through the work of Rachel's Challenge, Hero Club, and the Tolerance Team, as well as the guidance our parents provide our students, the majority of our students are aware of the ill effects that bullying can have and do not engage in that type of behavior.

I have enclosed for you some tips that the Tolerance Team distributed to address cyber bullying. In addition, our students will be engaged in presentations on Falcon Media to discuss social media in schools and society. I have also included links to the MCPS website on Cyber Safety, the policy on Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation as well as the form to report such actions. I encourage you to speak to your student about this issue.

<http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/info/cybersafety>

<http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/policy/pdf/jhfra.pdf>

<http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/forms/pdf/230-35.pdf>

FROM THE TOLERANCE TEAM

1. Bullies thrive on negative responses and attention.
2. Actions in response to Social Network Bullying
 - Post a reply that does not engage the bully.
 - Ignore the comments and do not post any reply.
 - Post a positive comment that addresses the audience, but not the bully.
 - Example: Justin Timberlake is on Late Night with Jimmy Fallon tonight.
 - Today is Pi Day at PHS
 - Post a positive comment about someone targeted that does not address the bully or the negative comments made about the target.
 - Talk to an adult you admire about the bullying.

3. A Caution

- Be very careful about speaking to a target of Social Network Bullying. They may not know they were targeted or be aware of the comments made. If you are sure they are aware of the bullying, you may want to seek them out and let them know you support them.

Please, do not hesitate to call the school with any concerns or suggestions. We need to work together.

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