



SUPERINTENDENT MESSAGE

A message from Dr. Ryder Warren of Northwest ISD

March 1, 2019



TO: Northwest ISD Parents and Caregivers

FROM: Ryder Warren, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Superintendent's Update

I hope everyone had a great week – even with the crazy weather. In my periodic updates to you, I try to be as forthcoming as possible as to the issues and challenges of the district, our schools, and our children. I also do my best to highlight as many positive things that are happening in the district, because we are so proud of our children and our staff members. This update is going to concentrate on some challenges we are up against right now, because I need every parent on the same page regarding these issues. And (in my opinion) it is imperative that our students see the school district, our schools, and our caregivers united on these fronts.

Let me first make a statement to start this discussion: we have great kids in NISD – everyone knows that. However, every one of our 24,000+ students have the capacity to make really bad decisions. Even our students who have never received a disciplinary write-up in their educational lives have the capacity to experience unwise moments ... that is why we call them kids. As the adults of NISD (parents, caregivers, and staff members), it is contingent on us to find out why some of these decisions are happening and work together to stop it. This is my “ask” to you.

I am going to discuss three subjects that are concerning me right now – electronic cigarettes/drug use, misuse of social media, and an internet challenge game called “Momo.”

Electronic Cigarettes/Drug Use

All parents and caregivers should have received an invitation this week to one of three meetings the district is hosting regarding electronic cigarettes. This school year we have seen an immense rise in students possessing electronic cigarettes. These things are also called vape pens (vapes), dap pens, Juul's, e-cigs, and a variety of other names. If you have not seen these, some closely resemble writing pens and some look just like computer flash drives. We are having a couple of different issues with these, which are: (1) every one of these devices contain enough “puffs” to equal two to three packs of regular cigarettes, so our kids who are experimenting with the vapes are getting an escalated

amount of nicotine that is having very adverse effects on them; and (2) we have students who are infusing the vapes with liquid and/or synthetic marijuana, and we have students ingesting other dangerous drugs.

Let me be very straight with you – these things are rampant at all three of our comprehensive high schools. We are dealing with students who have never been on our discipline radar, but we are confiscating these from them almost daily. With the addition of the illegal drugs to this challenge, that definitely ups the level. Over the last two weeks, the district has dealt with three student drug overdoses, and one of those was almost fatal (it might very well have been except for the life-saving work of an amazing team of teachers and staff).

Misuse of Social Media

Another issue we are facing is students, and (in one case) a parent, who are using social media to create rumors at one of our high schools about student fights and/or generally calling into question the safety and security of the school. Mr. Mike Blankenship, Eaton High School principal, sent a communication to all EHS parents that dispelled every rumor of campus unrest. We have identified a very small group of kids who were perpetuating this, and we have also identified the parent as well. The students are being disciplined according to the NISD Code of Conduct, and we will sit down with the adult to discuss the seriousness of these actions. Our students and staff at Eaton High School are business as usual, and they are having a great school year, so those who feel it necessary to create and spread rumors about the school simply need to unplug and stop.

Internet Challenge Game Called “Momo”

The last issue is just strange. Some parents might have already known about this (I did not), but there is an internet challenge game going around that tries to bully children into committing either violent or illegal acts. According to many sources, there is a lot more fiction than fact as to how impactful this urban legend is and if “Momo” messaging has truly been inserted into children’s online videos, but we do not want to have any of our children experience this. I’ve talked with so many parents who keep a constant eye on what their children do online, so do the same with this issue. Keep talking to them about healthy internet practices and to stay clear of anything that would ask them (or bully them) into doing harm to themselves or others.

How You Can Help

Again, I am asking us to come together – our families and our school district staff – and be the adults to lead our kids away from these things that would truly hurt them. As I stated above, every child has moments in which the logical thought processes just break down, and as adults, most of us learned valuable life lessons from very bad decisions we have made along the way. However, the challenges we are dealing with have the potential to cause true harm to our children, and that is why we have to step up as parents and as the school staff.

So – these are my requests:

1. Discuss these issues with your student(s);
2. Know what they have in their possession (i.e. vape pens);
3. Monitor closely what children are putting out on social media and make sure that information is appropriate;
4. Explain to them the danger and absurdity of any internet “game” that would mandate wrong behavior; and
5. Stay engaged when your children are on the internet and social media, set device limits, and control their access to technology when appropriate.

We need your support to safely run our schools day in and day out, and if there is

anything we can do to support you at home, we will do our best. Thank you for that support, and together we will complete a phenomenal school year.

Thank you,

Ryder Warren, Superintendent of Schools
Northwest Independent School District

For More Information

[The Truth About Drugs: Parent Presentations March 4, March 7, and March 19](#)

[Parent Concerns: Expert Tips by Common Sense Media](#)

[Family Engagement Resources by Common Sense Media](#)

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