



WE ARE YOUR SCHOOLS

FORT WAYNE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

May 4, 2018

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Heather's Law was enacted by the Indiana Legislature in 2011. The law is named after Heather Norris, a 20-year-old who was brutally murdered by her estranged high school boyfriend in 2007. The law is intended to encourage schools to effectively address issues of dating violence. In the upcoming weeks we have programs that students will attend to address this important topic.

Seventh and eighth grade students will participate in a program called Respect 360. This program focuses on self-esteem and healthy relationship boundaries. This program will take place in classrooms on May 7th for seventh grade students and May 14th for eighth grade students. Sixth grade students will attend presentations by our school resource officer, Officer McAfee and school counselor, Ms. McKay using Safe Dates curriculum during the week of May 14th. Safe Dates is a research-based program addressing attitudes and behaviors associated with dating abuse and violence.

On May 10th, there will be an all school assembly, the Get Schooled Tour, to address many struggles teenagers face including sexting, bullying, dating violence, and mental health concerns. Students will be encouraged to bring cell phones that day as they will be used to answer polling questions during the assembly.

Dating abuse can be a significant problem for teens – both boys and girls – as early as middle school. In the United States, about twelve percent of high school students report they have been physically abused by a dating partner in the previous year. Reports of psychological abuse are even higher with nearly twenty-nine percent of students reporting victimization in the prior year.

We understand that some parents do not want their teens dating until they are older. These programs do not push or promote dating, but will help prepare your child for the future when he or she may be dating. The goal is to teach teens how to be safe as they develop healthy relationships. As the caregiver, you play the most important role in keeping your teen safe in dating relationships. Teach that respect is a critical aspect in a dating relationship and watch for warning signs, including failing grades at school, changes in personality, bruises, scratches or other injuries, avoiding friends, and other unusual changes in behavior that could indicate dating abuse. Listen to your teen and tell him or her that you are there to help, not judge.

If you have any questions about these programs or dating abuse in general, please do not hesitate to call.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Angela McKay".

Angela McKay
Counselor, Jefferson Middle School

Jefferson Middle School

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