

To: Howard County Students and Parents,
Howard County High School Staff, and
Media

From: Howard County High School Principals:
Mrs. Kristen Bilkey, Principal, Northwestern High School,
Mrs. Angela Blessing, Principal, Kokomo High School,
Mr. Rick Davis, Principal, Western High School,
Mr. Eric Hartman, Principal, Taylor High School, and
Dr. Keith Richie, Principal, Eastern High School

Date: May 20, 2016

Re: **Statement Concerning Polling on Social Media**

Howard County school officials recently have been made aware of inappropriate and offensive polling sites anonymously posted on Twitter. Through social media, participants oftentimes are asked offensive questions about Howard County students.

Howard County school officials consider this type of activity to be irresponsible and against the principles that are espoused daily to our students. We pride ourselves on being high schools that embrace differences and protect the rights of all students, regardless of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, and/or other classifications. Each Howard County school corporation has individual policies in place to protect students and staff from discrimination and/or harassment.

Howard County school officials have notified local law enforcement concerning this issue. This social media activity appears to be originating from non-school locations and is NOT school sponsored or approved. As a precautionary measure, each district's technology staff regularly monitors its filter program to restrict this type of activity.

Multiple reports have been submitted to Twitter regarding "abusive and harmful" accounts as well as those that are "engaging in targeted harassment". An automatic response from Twitter states "Thanks for letting us know. If we find that this account is violating the Twitter rules, we will take action on it." Local school officials have received no further notification from Twitter that any further action has been taken.

All Howard County students are reminded that those who participate in activities that harass and/or bully other students or staff, whether inside or outside of school, may face disciplinary action in accordance with each school corporation's policies. Howard County high school principals encourage anyone with knowledge related to this activity to notify their local school office.

Support is available through high school counselors for students who may be negatively impacted by these unfortunate and irresponsible acts.

To any student or other person orchestrating this type of polling and to those participating, Howard County high school principals have the following message: "STOP! You are hurting other people and your actions are inappropriate. Further, you may be subject to disciplinary consequences."