

## More local students targeted by ‘sextortion’ scam

### Sean Lahman

Rochester Democrat and Chronicle USA TODAY NETWORK

Superintendent Jamie Farr said that several students in the Canandaigua school district had been targeted by online predators and fallen victim to an apparent online “sextortion” scam.

State Police are investigating, and it’s unclear whether the incidents are related to others which targeted students in nearby Yates County.

Farr described the incidents in a letter sent to parents and posted to the district website on Thursday.

“This person(s) has created numerous social media accounts, friended students and proceeded to obtain very personal and private images and information about these students,” Farr wrote. “The predator is now using this information to ‘blackmail’ the students to provide additional pictures and information with the threat of sharing what has already been provided on social media sites and other public entities.”

Officials with Penn Yan schools warned parents about a similar scam in a statement last week on its website.

Officials in the Dundee Central School District sent a similar letter earlier this month.

“As a district, we will do our part to monitor the activity on our website and available social media during school hours and we will continue to educate our students about safe and appropriate online interactions,” said Dundee Superintendent Kelly Houck in the letter. “We ask that you help and support by reinforcing the importance of responsible posting and responding to social media with your children, by monitoring their online interactions at home.”

The districts are urging parents to talk to their children about their social media presence and activities. Anyone who believes their child has been a target is asked to call police.

According to the U.S. Department of Justice, so-called “sextortion” is the fastest growing online threat against children.

■ Make children aware anything done online may be available to others

■ Make sure apps and privacy settings are set to the strictest level possible

■ Keep personal computers in a central location in your home

■ Review and approve apps downloaded to smart phones and monitor activity on those devices ■ Ensure an adult is present and engaged when children communicate via webcam

■ Regularly go through your child’s “friends” and “followers” lists and delete anyone your child has not met in person

■ Discuss internet safety with your children before they engage in any online activity and maintain those discussions as children become teenagers The agency says anyone who asks a child to engage in sexually explicit activity online should be reported to a parent, guardian or law enforcement immediately.

[SLAHMAN@Gannett.com](mailto:SLAHMAN@Gannett.com) Includes reporting by staff writer Meaghan McDermott

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*Canandaigua school district superintendent Jamie Farr*

The Federal Bureau of Investigations says parents should take these steps to help shield their children against “sextortion” activity: