

Explicit photos of students investigated

Snapchat may show Gates Chili, Greece kids

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Police are investigating explicit photos shared on Snapchat of students in the Gates Chili and Greece school districts.

A concerned parent contacted the Gates Police Department and the Gates Chili Central School District this week about an account on Snapchat, which may have contained lewd photos of district students, said Gates police Sgt. David Kaiser. The district reported the account to the authorities as well.

At this time, the district does not believe the photographs were taken during the school day and is investigating the matter.

“Gates Chili CSD encourages its students to be responsible digital citizens,” a Gates Chili statement read.

The news came after multiple districts in the region, including Canandaigua, Hilton and others in Wayne and Yates counties, were hit with a “sextortion” scam in recent months. The scam involves a perpetrator who creates a social media account, friends students and then blackmails them for private information or photos.

The Gates Chili and Greece incidents are not related to that scam.

Instead, the situation appears to involve students sharing photos and “trolling” each other on the internet, said Gates Police Lt. Robert Long. It’s also possible that a thread of photos from a similar incident several years ago has resurfaced and may include new photos, he said.

This is a widespread trend among teenagers nowadays, said Kaiser. “It happens all the time. Now all these kids have phones. ... Sometimes they’re making unwise decisions.”

Gates Police has been communicating with the district since the incident was reported, and hasn’t heard from any other parents or students so far.

Long cautioned students to think about what they post to the web, as it can be damaging or dangerous. “You put one photo on any of these social media channels, and it can be looked up 20 years from now,” he said. “It doesn’t go away.” Also circulated were explicit photos of Greece Central School District students, according to a district statement released to parents Wednesday afternoon. The Greece Police Department is investigating, and the incident is unrelated to school activities.

“We wanted to make you aware that explicit photos of students have reportedly been shared on social media or sent to student phones,” the statement read. “Unfortunately, it is not uncommon for inappropriate photos to be shared between young people or on social media.”

The district stressed that the best way to keep a photo out of the wrong hands “is not to take it,” and that it is illegal to possess or distribute explicit photos or videos of anyone under the age of 17.

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