

November 3, 2005

Dear Parents and Staff:

Many of you attended the sex offender seminar hosted at Arlington High School last spring which was conducted by the Dutchess County Sex Offender Management Project.

The information and insights were valuable to all of us and can be found at the following websites:

- Dutchess County Website ([www.dutchessny.gov](http://www.dutchessny.gov))
- NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services ([www.criminaljustice.state.ny.us](http://www.criminaljustice.state.ny.us))
- Town of Poughkeepsie Police ([www.townpolice.net](http://www.townpolice.net))

In summary, the presenters stressed the following guidelines to protect our youngsters:

1. Most sex offenders are not strangers, but persons known to the child.
2. The best protection we can provide to children is to teach them about personal safety – *Always report behavior that makes you uncomfortable to your parent or teacher; Never get in a car or go anywhere with a stranger; Don't let anyone touch you where you don't feel comfortable; etc.*
3. Many predators and sex offenders are NOT contained within the convicted sex offender registry. Convicted sex offenders are classified as to their risk of re-offense:
  - *Level 1* (low risk) - not in registry
  - *Level 2* (moderate risk) - not in registry
  - *Level 3* (high risk). Only *Level 3* offenders are within the registry but those who committed crimes before 1995 are not included. *Level 3* sex offenders are listed on the criminal justice websites noted above.

Notification of the presence of Level 3 sex offenders remains a weak component of state law. Everyone, including law enforcement, is struggling with effective and efficient notification measures often due to the overlapping jurisdictions in law enforcement and the vagueness of state law implementation. Unfortunately, there are even circumstances when school officials become aware of sex offenders who have moved into the school district from residents themselves.

In an effort to improve communication about the presence of sex offenders registered in our communities, we direct you to the New York State Sex Offender Registry website. We are investigating future methods of automatic notification by the State to school and parent email. Unfortunately, this technology is not yet available.

A lack of progress in state-wide electronic notification systems has prompted us to implement the following procedures. When the school district becomes aware of level three sex offenders, we will distribute that information as follows:

1. Each teacher and staff member in the affected building in which the offender is residing
  2. Principals, staff, and Association leaders of all schools
  3. All school bus drivers and transportation personnel
  4. All PTA officers
  5. Parents and guardians in the elementary and middle schools in which the offender is residing.
- These specific notifications will be via U.S. mail delivery to all addresses on file at the school.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have additional ideas or suggestions to assist our community protecting our children.

Sincerely,

Frank V. Pepe, Jr.  
Superintendent of Schools