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Waterford Valley High

HOME OF THE WARRIORS

Friday, May 11, 2018

To: Parents/Guardians of Waterford Valley High
Subject: Prom Activities

Waterford Valley High is well underway with the planning of our final Prom Event, scheduled for Friday, May 18th, 2018. High School prom is an important and exciting milestone in a young person's life, and we want students to celebrate this occasion in a safe manner that is respectful of their school community, their fellow students, and in accordance with school policies. Experience has shown us that there are challenges that tend to arise this time of year and we believe it is timely to provide direction and support.

Instructional Time

The loss of instructional time leading up to and during the period of graduation/prom events is of great concern for schools. We know that students sometimes miss instructional time to participate in unsanctioned events and/or to prepare for prom. Students and parents/guardians must understand that even through prom is approaching, important curricular outcomes remain to be taught and students need to attend scheduled classes in order to be best prepared for their upcoming final examinations. We ask for parent/guardian support to help minimize student absenteeism during this time of year.

Alcohol Consumption

Prom activities also brings with it challenges surrounding the consumption of alcohol by attendees at graduation/prom events, including students and their family members. These issues can be a cause for concern on many levels. All members of our school community are reminded that all school sponsored graduation/prom events, including but not limited to, the formal ceremony, reception(s) and Safe Grad, are alcohol free events for all attendees. School administrators and their designates are within their right to deny event access to any individual suspected to be under the influence of alcohol or illicit drugs, and to prohibit the consumption of such substance by any attendee at a school-sponsored event. Whether the graduation or other related events are hosted on school grounds or in a rental space off property, principals have the authority and responsibility to deny access to those suspected to be under the influence, and the District will be in full support of such decisions.

There have also been situations where independently organized parent/guardian events include the consumption of alcohol. While these are private functions, we would like to remind our school community that such events are illegal if they involve youth under the age of 19, and pose a risk to student safety and can impact student learning and other important functions within the school. Furthermore, given that such events may be planned to occur on the same day as the graduation/prom ceremony, all parents/guardians and students should be advised of the school's stance regarding denying access to prom events by any suspected of being under the influence.

Parents Reminded to "Set the Rules" this Prom and Graduation Season

7-step plan of action helps remind parents to "talk to their kids" about the dangers of drugs and alcohol as prom and graduation parties are held -

During this prom and graduation season, the school urges parents to open lines of communication and to talk with their teens about the dangers of underage drinking and substance abuse. Underage drinking as well as binge drinking - defined as five or more drinks in a 2 hour period for males, and 4 or more drinks in a 2 hour period for females - occurs at significant rates.

We are offering parents and caregivers a plan of action to help engage their teenagers in healthy conversations about underage drinking and drug abuse. Our teens need to be reminded frequently about the serious consequences associated with underage drinking and drug abuse. Our children are especially vulnerable during prom and graduation season, when parties are frequent and summer vacation is just around the corner.

Below is a **Seven-Step Plan of Action** to help remind parents about what to do as prom and graduation parties are held and the risk for underage drinking and drug abuse is increased:

1. **Parents Must Not Serve Alcohol.** Serving alcohol to minors is a serious, criminal offense. Even allowing underage youth access to alcohol (without directly providing it) violates the law. In addition, parents who provide or allow underage youth access to alcohol open themselves up to significant financial liability. Beyond legal ramifications, it's important to remember that young people who start using alcohol before age 15 are five times more likely to have alcohol-related problems later in life (U.S. Surgeon General, 2007).
2. **Trust, but Verify.** Know your son or daughter's itinerary for the evening and check in with other adults or your child. In this day of cell phones, it is not unreasonable to —check in with your child to confirm that they are where they say they are. Establish a curfew with your teenager based on past behavior and trustworthiness. Discuss your expectations and involve him or her in these decisions.
3. **#DontForgetSocialMedia.** Check your teenager's Facebook, Twitter or Instagram account. If you don't know what something means – ask. There are lots of slang terms used as code to cover drinking and drug use, so if you're unsure as to what is being said, check out teenchatdecoder.com or decoder.drugfree.org.
4. **Consider Throwing An Alcohol-Free Party.** One strategy to keep teens safe is to host an alcohol-free party. This too requires vigilance, as everyone entering must be checked at the door and nobody should be allowed to leave and then return. Parents should also consider banning backpacks and outside beverages. Water bottles and other containers should not be allowed, as it's very easy to substitute alcohol for the original contents.
5. **No Hotel Rooms.** Do not rent teens a hotel room or let them go off to a remote location (like someone's vacation home) without proper adult supervision. Teenagers and unsupervised seclusion can be a recipe for disaster.
6. **Talk To Your Teen (Listen Carefully Too!)** Even if you have talked previously with your son or daughter, prom and graduation nights are good times to reinforce your expectations. Don't just talk—listen and be reasonable. Specifically, talk about the dangers of getting into a car with someone who has been drinking.
7. **Be Available.** Agree that your son or daughter can call you at any time for help or advice and that you will pick him/her up if needed, no questions asked that night. Create a code word that your son or daughter can use to indicate that help is needed.

