

By Jan Rahn

Managing Editor

An incident of computer hacking at school sent administration and staff scrambling to identify the perpetrator and take necessary steps of prevention.

According to Perkins County Schools Superintendent Tobin Buchanan, the incident happened over the weekend of March 19 when some students and staff received inappropriate emails that had been sent through student accounts.

Buchanan said the incident is a good reminder to everyone at the school how important passwords are in protecting individual accounts. Some of the account passwords had not been changed when accounts were initially set up, and whoever was able to hack into the system did so with the intent to incriminate those who had not followed specific instructions to change their passwords immediately at the beginning of the school year, said Buchanan.

The school is 99.9 percent sure where the hacking origination site is and can only assume who the perpetrator is who sent the inappropriate student-to-student and student-to-staff emails, said Buchanan.

“We believe we have taken the necessary steps to lessen the possibility of this occurring again,” he said.

Because of the content of the emails, suspicion was immediately raised that someone was posing as students who were sending inappropriate messages to staff and others within the system.

He said the investigation is complete at this time, but the case is not closed.

On Monday, March 22, which was the first day back to school following the incident, tech support personnel at school shut down the system to eliminate access, and took necessary steps to redo passwords.

“The tech people did a good job in upgrading the system to detect misuse better,” said Buchanan. “This is a good reminder to all of us to be diligent in protecting passwords and protecting our information.”

He also reminds students and staff that anything on the school computers, including emails and other material, can be retraced and found with the proper steps and tools—even if it has been deleted.

“Students need to remember to use their computers appropriately—they are the property of the school,” said Buchanan.