## [Editorial: Questionable Tweet Provokes a Call to Action](http://ahsneedle.com/?p=12645)

Atlantic High School *Needle*, Atlantic, Iowa

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On Friday, August 16, an explicit image was posted from an eighth-grade teacher’s Twitter account. Students following Marnie Leiferman were shocked by the image, and former graduates of AHS retweeted it. Many students screenshotted and forwarded the picture around, and the news quickly spread. The tweet was quickly deleted, but the deletion did little to control the image from spreading around the district. A statement from the administration regarding the incident has yet to be released.

At this time, no school authority has stepped up to directly address the issue to the students or the community. It is important that authorities maintain transparency in how they are addressing the situation, especially in a case where the issue is widespread public knowledge.

Additionally, in a district where the school has directly addressed the issue of social media misconduct on multiple occasions, it should be expected that the administration follows through in their actions regarding both students and faculty. By not publicly addressing the situation, the administration sends a message to the community that the standards taught to the students are not truly valued by the district.

Lead editors of the AHS needle requested interviews of Mr. Josh Rasmussen, the Atlantic Middle School Principal, Dr. Michael Amstein, the District Superintendent, and Mrs. Marnie Leiferman, whose twitter account is in question. Both Rasmussen and Leiferman declined an interview. Leiferman stated “I fear that at this point in time, my input would only serve as a further distraction from student learning and fuel a larger fire rather than working toward extinguishing it.” Amstein accepted our request for an interview, but said he would not comment directly on the topic.

In our interview with Amstein, he emphasised the fact that securing phones and social media accounts is extremely important. He informed us that the school was treating the incident as an issue of a compromised account. However, the term “compromised” does not clear up the issue of who posted the photo. If the account was compromised, the school should take steps to track the online trail of the image, to prove that Leiferman did not, intentionally or unintentionally, post the photo, and clear up the controversy surrounding the photo.

Amstein also informed us that the police department was never asked to get involved, and the investigation was headed internally by Josh Rasmussen, as is school protocol. According to Amstein, the only outside source asked for input on the investigation was the school board attorney.

There have been multiple precedents set from surrounding districts, and even our own, that model how our school could have potentially handled this situation. One incident occurred earlier this year at Glenwood High School. In January of 2013, questionable pictures of the Glenwood High School Principal were posted on Facebook. The principal was fired and the school board cited these reasons for her dismissal: “poor judgment, inappropriate use of resources and being an ineffective role model.”

Atlantic Community Schools set an example for the students last year by having Byron Utter speak to the students at a high school assembly. The assembly directly addressed the issue of sexting and cyber bullying. The speaker outlined the potential consequences of behaving inappropriately through cell phone and social media use. He also emphasized that the decisions made on these outlets have the potential to follow people for the rest of their lives, and have a major impact on possible careers. However, the school’s actions don’t follow the example they are trying to set for their students. The weight of morals preached to their students is lessened when the district ignores those same morals with their policies and actions towards faculty.

A potential reason that the district has decided to remain quiet about this situation is to keep the school from being criticized by media like we have been in the past. In 2009, an AHS strip search incident made state news, and eventually arrived to the Iowa Supreme Court. The athletic director was initially placed on leave, and eventually resigned. In 2011, Atlantic was in the news once again with a pencil-stabbing incident that took place at the middle school. One of the key aspects of both of these stories was that the authority figures handled the situations in a way that either didn’t correctly follow protocol, or made decisions that the community perceived as inappropriate.

Now, in 2013, a situation has arrived where a teacher may have posted a provocative image in a very public forum. Her students, past and present, have potentially seen the image and so have many community members.

The sound of whispers from parents and students has filtered through the community. Our district should directly address the incident to let our students know that it is being handled. Additionally, the district needs to follow through with the issues that they have labeled “important.”