



December 15, 2009

## Schools on alert after abduction scare

*BY MATT MANNING*

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FREMONT -- Fremont City Schools is on high alert after a possible abduction attempt.

A security guard is now stationed at Hayes Elementary School to watch over students and look for suspicious activity after an incident last week.

According to Fremont police reports, a man walked into the school around lunchtime Friday. The man entered the office, identified a 9-year-old student by name and said he was there to take him to a doctor's appointment.

Principal Laurie Selvey asked the man if the student, who has a learning disability, knew that he had a doctor's appointment or if he had any type of note from a parent. The man replied he did not.

Selvey then called the student to the office and asked the man if the student would return to school after the appointment. He replied that he would.

The unidentified man started to leave the office and yelled to school staff that he would be waiting in the car.

A school secretary, Regina Reed, escorted the boy out to the parking lot, but the man was gone. The student was returned to class.

Reed told police she called the mother, father and a grandparent about the incident. The mother, Jacqueline Richardson, said she has no idea who the man is.

"I'm the only one who can take my child to the doctor," she said. "You're thinking they're going to school and they're going to be safe."

The school called Richardson after the incident, but because she works during the day she didn't get the message until hours later.

"My stomach dropped," she said. "He knows not to talk to strangers. ... It's very creepy."

She said when she returned home with her son, she sat him down and explained the situation. Since the incident, she said she's been trying to figure out the identity of the man. She's also taking her own security measures.

"I've been thinking about my past," she said. "Making sure the doors are locked. Sitting through his basketball practices."

Richardson called police to investigate and help find answers, but Chief Tim Wiersma said there were few answers to give.

"It's one of those things where your stomach falls," Wiersma said. "We just don't have any clues. There has to be some familiarities with the family."

Wiersma said persons involved have been re-interviewed, but nothing has changed. He has no idea how the situation might have turned out.

"It could be innocent, could be wicked," he said, "Things just don't add up."

Superintendent Traci McCaudy said the district has a safety plan, but one step was overlooked -- the school never asked for identification.

"We need to be consistent," McCaudy said. "We need to revise the sign-out sheet."

McCaudy said she found out about the incident hours later after school had let out.

To prevent this from happening again, McCaudy urges parents to update their child's medical cards and offer suggestions to the district.

She said Hayes and other schools will be on high alert, and both Richardson children will have security with them during school.

In the meantime, a principals' meeting is scheduled this week for staff to talk about the incident.

Richardson said she is just glad her son was not harmed.

"My main concern isn't just only to keep my child safe, but somebody else's," she said.

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