

 Search

Tweet

After Arrest Of Teacher, Questions About Vetting

New revelations of Zauder’s apparent online activity on social media sites.

05/08/12 | Hella Winston | Special To The Jewish Week

Tweet 7
Share 30
Like
ⓧ <http://www.thejewishweek.com/forward?path=node/23696>
ⓧ http://www.thejewishweek.com/print/news/national/after_arrest_teacher_questions_about_vetting

In the wake of the shocking arrest last week of a yeshiva teacher and youth worker for possession of child pornography, attention is turning to how day school – and indeed, all – teachers are vetted, and how to balance the need to ensure children’s safety with legal concerns about discrimination and privacy.

Evan Zauder, a sixth-grade teacher at the Modern Orthodox school [Yeshivat Noam](http://www.yeshivatnoam.org/education/school/school.php?sectionid=3) (http://www.yeshivatnoam.org/education/school/school.php?sectionid=3) in Paramus, N.J, was arrested last Thursday after a tip led the FBI to his Manhattan apartment, where agents reportedly found on his computer hundreds of images and videos of boys engaged in sex acts. If convicted, Zauder faces up to 10 years in jail and a maximum fine of \$250,000.

Based on an Internet search, Zauder appears to have been involved in viewing and/or posting pornographic material online – including videos of him masturbating – as far back as 2007, The Jewish Week has discovered. It is unclear whether or not any of that material is considered illegal.

Zauder, 26, has a history of working with young people, as a former youth director at [Congregation Bnai Yeshurun](http://www.bnaiyeshurun.org/) (http://www.bnaiyeshurun.org/) in Teaneck and a former part-time youth director at Hebrew Institute of Riverdale in the Bronx and with Bnei Akiva, a Modern Orthodox Zionist youth group. He also is in the master’s of education program at New York University, where he is a Jim Joseph Foundation fellow, and is a rabbinical student at Yeshiva University’s Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary.

In a statement reported in the [Teaneck Patch](http://teaneck.patch.com/) (http://teaneck.patch.com/), Yeshivat Noam’s principal, Rabbi Chaim Hagler, said that, “At this point, we have no reason to believe that any of our students are in any way involved or directly affected.”

The Jewish Week knows of no reports indicating that Zauder has actually molested a child. However, a Google search by the paper of his AOL Instant Messenger screen name – which appears next to his real name on a message board for Teaneck Youth Directors and on a website for Congregation Bnai Yeshurun – turns up a list of links that contain that screen name, as well as descriptions that indicate that the sites they lead to display pornographic images or videos. Some of these have the word “teen” in the title (which does not necessarily mean that those pictured on these sites are in fact underage) and apparently feature males.

The Jewish Week was able to determine that the screen name that appears in these links

Newsletter Signup

Email: *

Subscribe to the Newsletter: *

- Send Me Information About Jewish Week Events
- Food & Wine Newsletter
- Special Offers
- The Jewish Week Free Enewsletter
- Keep Me Informed on Jewish News, Culture, and Opinion

Please select the area(s) of interest you have from the above and click the sign up button below.

Subscribe to this news feed

[New York](#)

<http://www.thejewishweek.com/rss/news/>

News Sections

- [Long Island News](/sections/news/long-island-news/)
- [New York](/sections/news/new-york/)
- [Westchester](/sections/news/westchester/)
- [Writing On The Wall](/sections/news/writing-wall/)
- [National](/sections/news/national/)
- [Israel News](/sections/news/israel-news/)
- [International](/sections/news/international/)
- [Briefs](/sections/news/news-brief/)
- [Short Takes](/sections/news/short-takes/)
- [Breaking](/sections/news/breaking/)
- [JW Events](/sections/news/iw-events/)
- [Advertorial](/sections/news/advertorial/)
- [JInsider](/sections/news/iinsider/)

is very likely to be Zauder's because the videos of him masturbating, in which his face is clearly visible, appear on a playlist for his screen name. The same AOL screen name appears in the "sex" section of a message board for Jewish teens next to a message posted in 2004 and linked to someone identifying himself as being from Toronto with a birth date in January 1986; Zauder attended high school in Toronto and is 26 years old.

Rabbi Hagler did not return calls from The Jewish Week seeking information about whether the school performed a background check on Zauder. But Rabbi Hagler told the Forward that Zauder "had been the 'subject of extensive interviews and received multiple positive background references.'"

These comments would seem to indicate that the school did not conduct a formal background check on Zauder, something it is not legally mandated to do and which, if limited to a criminal history, nonetheless may not have turned up Zauder's online activities.

Indeed, Rabbi Ellis Bloch, the associate director of the [Jewish Education Project](http://www.thejewisheducationproject.org/) (<http://www.thejewisheducationproject.org/>), an organization that works with 300 day schools in New York City, Westchester and Long Island, and seeks to encourage and promote innovation in Jewish education, told The Jewish Week, "I think we need to have a little bit of perspective on this. If you look at the literature in the business world, the idea of Googling an applicant is something that only recently has come to light. So, to find that schools may not have done this is not too surprising because the idea of doing this is so new."

Calls to the Ramaz School, the Hebrew Academy of the Five Towns and Rockaway (HAFTR) and the Yeshivah of Flatbush seeking comment on their vetting policies for teachers were not immediately returned.

Mark Shinar, the director of general studies at SAR (<http://www.saracademy.org/>) in Riverdale, wrote in an e-mail to The Jewish Week, "Aside from interviews and complete reference checks, SAR does run criminal background checks on all potential employees."

Since 1986, the New Jersey Department of Education has required all new school district employees to be fingerprinted and undergo a criminal history background check. However, no such requirement exists for New Jersey's private schools, for which such background checks remain optional. (A 2007 report by the New Jersey State Legislature's Office of Legislative Services notes that approximately 50 percent of non-public New Jersey schools have chosen voluntarily to go through the Department of Education criminal background check). New York State law requires all applicants for certification and all prospective employees of school districts, charter schools and boards of cooperative educational services to undergo fingerprint-supported criminal history background checks.

The Archdiocese of New York has a Safe Environment Program that, among other things, mandates that all prospective staff members, including volunteers, in regular contact with children submit to a background check and fill out a questionnaire calling for basic background information, such as prior employment and character references. The background check is limited to verification of a person's identity, existence of a prior criminal record and listing on state sex-offender registries.

Indeed, in recent years mandatory fingerprinting and background checks for Jewish school employees have been a high priority for some Jewish child safety advocates.

The Jewish Board of Advocates for Children, headed by attorney Elliot Pasik, was instrumental in obtaining the passage of a 2007 New York State law authorizing yeshivas and all nonpublic schools to fingerprint and conduct FBI criminal history background checks on their employees. That law, however, stopped short of requiring these measures and, according to a 2010 article in the New York Post, since the law passed,

fewer than 1 percent of New York State's 1,900 private schools were running fingerprint checks on job applicants. Based on information obtained through a Freedom of Information Law request in 2010, Pasik found that only one out of the nearly 400 Jewish schools in New York State had taken advantage of the ability to conduct a fingerprint check.

According to the JEP's Rabbi Bloch, the issue of background checks has come up "at principals' councils' meetings over the past number of years." However, he noted that "it is hard to get a handle on the number of schools doing background checks, since each of the schools is an independent entity and they guard their independence."

In fact, in response to an e-mail from The Jewish Week, Richard Langer, the executive director of The Hebrew Institute of Riverdale, where Zauder was employed, noted that while youth directors have "always gone through an extensive interview process and reference checks ... this past winter the synagogue formally adopted a policy of requiring all new hires at the synagogue to undergo a background check."

While apparent evidence of Zauder's involvement with pornography was not difficult to find through some basic Google searching, experts urge caution in general in using information that is publicly posted online to make hiring decisions.

According to an October 2010 public employment law bulletin put out by the University of North Carolina School of Government, "almost half of the employers responding to a 2009 survey by the employment website Career Builder.com reported using social media Internet sites as a part of their background check on job applicants." However, while getting information that is publicly posted online about a prospective employee is not illegal, using that information to make hiring decisions can be, if it is the basis for discrimination based on personal characteristics such as race, gender, religion, disability and age.

Indeed, had any of the schools or other organizations for which Zauder had worked come across this material during the hiring process, Murray Schwartz, a lawyer in practice for 60 years specializing in employment discrimination, would have advised them – assuming the material was not in fact illegal – to confront Zauder.

"Call him in and confront him with it. Give him a chance to explain. I would probably say that transparency becomes very, very important and that [the potential employer] do everything they can to learn as much as they can because they are being given the greatest obligation anybody could undertake – caring for children."

Getting as much information as possible "before [the potential employer] might do anything that might interfere with this person's human rights, or whatever rights they have," is important, added Schwartz, because "you want to be able to satisfy your obligations to him as a potential employer."

But, he emphasized, "you also certainly want to satisfy your obligations to the children you're caring for."

[Click here to write a letter to the editor of The Jewish Week](#)
([/.../contact/Letters to the Editor](#))

[child pornography \(/child_pornography_0\)](#), [Evan Zauder \(/evan_zauder\)](#), [Yeshivat Noam \(/yeshivat_noam\)](#)

Last Update: 05/31/2012 - 12:15

Tweet 7 Share 30 Like  (<http://www.thejewishweek.com/forward?path=node/23696>) 
(http://www.thejewishweek.com/print/news/national/after_arrest_teacher_questions_about_vetting)

Related Recommended Reading

- [N.J. Yeshiva Teacher, Formerly Youth Leader, Charged With Having Child Pornography \(/news/breaking_news/nj_yeshiva_teacher_formerly_youth_leader_charged_having_child_pornography\)](#)
- [From Rising Jewish Ed Star To Kiddie Porn Perp \(/blogs/yad/rising_jewish_ed_star_kiddie_porn_perp\)](#)
- [N.J. Yeshiva Teacher, Formerly Youth Leader, Charged With Having Child Pornography \(/news/breaking_news/nj_yeshiva_teacher_formerly_youth_leader_charged_having_child_pornography_0\)](#)
- [Feds Hit Brooklyn Rabbi With Child Porn Charges \(/news/new-york/feds-hit-brooklyn-rabbi-child-porn-charges\)](#)
- [Ex-N.Y. Day School Teacher Busted On Child Porn Charges \(/news/briefs/ex-ny-day-school-teacher-busted-child-porn-charges\)](#)

Comment Guidelines

The Jewish Week feels comments create a valuable conversation and wants to feature your thoughts on our website. To make everyone feel welcome, we won't publish comments that are profane, irrelevant, promotional or make personal attacks.

Submitted by Anonymous (not verified) on Tue, 05/29/2012 - 16:32.

I read this article and think "Hindsight is 20/20".

Submitted by Anonymous (not verified) on Fri, 05/18/2012 - 14:16.

I have always believed that The Jewish Week did the right thing by shining a light on the issue of child molestation in the Orthodox Jewish community. However, I believe that in this case you went much too far. I am not sure that this situation needed to be brought to public attention at all, since at the time of publication there was no known accusation that he had ever molested a child. If you did feel it necessary to warn the community of a potential risk, there was no need to include many of the details that you included, such as details about online videos, which I assume can now be accessed by anyone skilled enough to follow your directions. This is a young man who did not ask to have these inclinations and may well be battling against them, who may himself have been a victim of abuse, and who will need to, at some point, try to rebuild and live out his life. There was no need for The Jewish Week to make this so much more difficult for him and his family.

Submitted by Anonymous (not verified) on Wed, 05/16/2012 - 13:56.

All employers may need to do medical and psychological pre-screening of job applicants. Children and vulnerable adults need to be protected from perverts/sexual predators, at schools (public or private), camps, hospitals, residential living facilities (orphanages, state schools, day programs). No employer should be exempt from this.

What kind of rehab is available for people like Mr. Zauder and what is the rate of recidivism?

How will the Jewish and secular communities prevent another Mr. Zauder from working with children and vulnerable (physical and/or verbal limitations) adults?

Submitted by anonymous (not verified) on Tue, 05/15/2012 - 08:13.

1 out of 400 schools fingerprint their staff members according to the Jewish Week. I wonder why they were just not upfront and say that North Shore Hebrew Academy HS in Great Neck, NY is that school. How unfortunate that the Jewish Week just can't bring itself to be totally honest.

Submitted by AndrewDavids (not verified) on Mon, 05/14/2012 - 11:16.

One hopes this is an anomaly; however, when taking responsibility for other people's children, this is the type of extra due diligence every Jewish organization that works with children should be taking on as standard protocol.

Beit Rabban Day School began running criminal background checks on all new and current faculty and staff almost two years ago. While we believe that all of our staff want to work with young children for the correct reasons - now we know. As the

head of our professional team, I - and our parents - sleep better at night.

Submitted by Anonymous (not verified) on Mon, 05/14/2012 - 11:02.

The fact it has taken this long to do something about him is just TERRIBLE.
I hope he gets more years then 10!

Submitted by Anonymous (not verified) on Thu, 05/10/2012 - 17:18.

For Jewish Week's sake, I hope Zauder does not do anything to hurt himself, or his blood will be on your hands. There was no need to bring a video he made in 2004 to the public, he was already going to be banned from working with kids for the rest of his life.

Submitted by Anonymous (not verified) on Wed, 05/09/2012 - 14:40.

This is crazy!!!! You seem to be blaming the schools for not conducting an extensive enough of a background check on all teachers by implying that schools need to check out a teacher's sexual habits and preferences. Short from putting a secret webcam in their bedroom, how is a school to find out this information?

Submitted by Anonymous (not verified) on Wed, 05/09/2012 - 09:28.

While certainly concerning in light of the other allegations, the fact that an AIM address is found on various sites is hardly conclusive. It would take me 5 minutes to create an AIM address posing as another person and post comments in their name on whatever site I like.

Add comment

Your name: *

Anonymous

E-mail: *

The content of this field is kept private and will not be shown publicly.

Comment: *

By submitting this form, you accept the [Mollom privacy policy \(https://mollom.com/web-service-privacy-policy\)](https://mollom.com/web-service-privacy-policy).

Submit Comment

Preview

The Jewish Week | Featured Sites of Interest

- [RAISER & KENNIFF, PC. - CRIMINAL DEFENSE LAWYERS \(HTTP://WWW.CRIMINALLAWNYER.COM\)](http://www.criminallawnyer.com)
- [YACON-SYRUP \(HTTP://WWW.MYFITNESSPAL.COM/BLOG/RICKYMEYERS1/VIEW/YACON-SYRUP-EFFORTLESS-FAST-WEIGHT-LOSS-620483\)](http://www.myfitnesspal.com/blog/rickymeayers1/view/yacon-syrup-effortless-fast-weight-loss-620483)
- [NAPLESBAYCOLONYPROPERTIES.COM \(HTTP://WWW.NAPLESBAYCOLONYPROPERTIES.COM\)](http://www.naplesbaycolonyproperties.com)
- [CALGARY MLS \(HTTP://WWW.JUSTLISTEDCALGARY.CA/\)](http://www.justlistedcalgary.ca/)
- [TAMPA FISHING CHARTERS \(HTTPS://ITREK.COM/\)](https://itrek.com/)
- [LIMO SERVICE NJ \(HTTP://5STARLIMORENTAL.COM\)](http://5starlimorental.com)
- [INSPIRATIONAL SUCCESS QUOTES & SAYINGS \(HTTP://WWW.KEEPINSPIRING.ME/FAMOUS-QUOTES-ABOUT-SUCCESS\)](http://www.keepinspiring.me/famous-quotes-about-success)
- [BUY CHEAP TWITTER FOLLOWERS \(HTTP://WWW.BUYCHEAPTWITTERFOLLOWERS.COM\)](http://www.buycheaptwitterfollowers.com)
- [CONNECTICUT SHORELINE PROPERTIES \(HTTP://HILLYERTEAM.COM/LISTINGS\)](http://hillyerteam.com/listings)
- [HTTP://WWW.MYINSURANCEGUIDE.CO.NZ \(HTTP://WWW.MYINSURANCEGUIDE.CO.NZ/\)](http://www.myinsuranceguide.co.nz)
- [BAD CREDIT LOANS \(HTTP://BADCREDITLOANS.FREEFORUMS.ORG/BAD-CREDIT-LOANS-DIRECT-LENDERS-ONLY-BAD-CREDIT-PAYDAY-LOANS-T3.HTML\)](http://badcreditloans.freeforums.org/bad-credit-loans-direct-lenders-only-bad-credit-payday-loans-t3.html)
- [LOS ANGELES CAR ACCIDENT LAWYER \(HTTP://WWW.FARALAW.ORG/\)](http://www.faralaw.org/)
- [PERSONAL INJURY ATTORNEYS LA - WEINSTEIN LAW \(HTTP://PERSONALINJURYATTORNEYSLOSANGELES.ORG/\)](http://personalinjuryattorneyslosangeles.org/)
- [PRESCOTT FINANCIAL \(HTTP://BESTAUTOLENDERS.COM/BLOG/CATEGORY/BUY-HERE-PAY-HERE-CAR-LOTS/\)](http://bestautolenders.com/blog/category/buy-here-pay-here-car-lots/)