­­­­­­Did a girl go into labor in the high school? Were kids arrested for smoking in the bathroom and back stairwell? Is Kid Cudi coming to prom? It’s the pathetic truth, but Shaker students find entertainment in the bizarre rumors that persist throughout the high school because no one ever confirms or denies them. When rumors of a student bringing an unloaded gun to school emerged recently, however, the administration’s silence left us worried, not amused.

School districts such as Mentor Public Schools designate a specific page on their websites for rumor control. When rumors arise among students, faculty and the community, these districts publish statements about their validity. On April 5, 2011, Mentor’s rumor page confirmed a rumor that the school’s football stadium had been vandalized. The post stated the facts and encouraged the community to contact the police with any information. This technique keeps everyone calm. No one can invent facts or events if the administration takes the initiative to clear everything up in the first place. Rumors cannot escalate if they are quickly stopped.

District rumor control isn’t about the inner workings of a clique – it’s about keeping the community informed about what happens at school. When rumors circulated regarding an armed student during the school day, the administration should have at least made it clear that the issue was under control. Principal Michael Griffith sent an email to employees titled “HS Incident” in which he explained that a student had been arrested for bringing an unloaded, “non-functioning” semi-automatic weapon to school. But he did not communicate with students. Kids being arrested, girls going into labor – these rumors may be dramatic but don’t affect our day-to-day activities beyond a little distraction. However, a semi-automatic weapon in our hallways certainly does. As students in this building, we are as much a part of this community as the adults, and we deserve the truth. The administration has no obligation to report the truth of meaningless, childish rumors; however the big ones should not be swept under the rug.

Unfortunately, even with a district rumor control system in place, students take it upon themselves to control the flow of rumors. Such is the case with the thedashxx.webs.com, where an anonymous Shaker student posts tips and shares details about students’ personal lives “solely for entertainment and communication.” The early posts included vague information, but the site administrator soon began posting students’ initials, poorly blurred tweets and pictures. With the DASH distracting most of the student body and the creator updating the site throughout the school day, we wonder why the administration hasn’t intervened. The DASH violates students’ privacy and, in some instances, approaches libel. The site also depicts the Shaker community negatively. Shaker prides itself on its respected reputation, and we hope this would be reason enough for the administration to take action against the DASH.

Petty rumors and problems within friend groups are a part of our experiences – they come with growing up. However, when distractions cause us to spend our days clarifying whether the gun a kid brought to school was loaded, or which student is represented by initials on the DASH, the administration has a responsibility to take charge. Make no mistake; teenagers are persistent. Just because the administration lets something blow over doesn’t mean the students won’t search to find the answers themselves. If we’re being taught to leave Shaker as mature young adults, treat us like it. If our English teachers have the guts to bring up the controversial rumor website to their students, so should the administration.