Paul Horner, who is a fake news writer, stated, “Honestly, people are definitely dumber. They just keep passing stuff around. Nobody fact-checks anything anymore... (http://tinyurl.com/j4qy5aq).”

Educators and students must prove Horner wrong. Putting the responsibility on Facebook or other social media to eradicate or control the problem of fake news isn’t the solution. Instead, we need to develop citizens who take careful steps to verify that the information they are reading anywhere on the web is reliable. (http://blog.williamferriter.com/2016/11/19/what-are-you-doing-to-teach-students-to-spot-sketchy-news-stories/)

3 TIPS FOR IDENTIFYING FAKE NEWS

1. TRUST YOUR INSTINCT:
   - What is your initial thought as you read a story?
   - Is it believable?
   - Does it make sense?
   - Does it read well? (e.g. grammar, spelling, sentence structure, language).

2. ZERO IN ON VISUAL CUES:
   - Is the article layout done in a professional way (e.g. uniform text, consistent fonts, general layout)
   - Are visuals photoshopped or realistic? (A “drag and drop” of the photo into Google images may help locate the source of the photo.)

3. SCRUTINIZE CONTENT:
   - Is the information weighted with “loaded” words or phrases?
   - Is there obvious bias in the content?
   - Can you track the original source for the story?
   - What information is available about the sources? Read the “About Us” segment of a site.
   - Can you find three reliable websites to verify the facts?
   - Have other reputable news sources picked up this story?
   - Double-check the URL (e.g., .gov is a U.S. government site, .edu is an educational site).

Note: Shrewd fake news writers are adept at making content look good, so continue through all three steps in order to identify fake stories.

Before sharing or using information, be sure it is authentic.