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March 1, 2019

Dear Parents/Guardians,

It has come to our attention that there is a new Internet game called the Momo Challenge that your child may be inadvertently accessing online. This game has received significant media attention in recent days as it has dangerous repercussions and is in fact a type of cyberbullying. We encourage you to closely monitor what your child is doing while online.

Momo begins with an anonymous person - hiding behind a haunting avatar - sending violent images to the user, telling them to perform a series of dangerous tasks including self-harm. Access to this game is occurring through messaging apps, games and social media platforms, including Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, Fortnite, Minecraft and more. Momo then gives orders and threatens the user if they don't follow them. The game targets children and youth.

Our Board is monitoring this situation very closely and is working to ensure that this game is not accessible to our students on any board issued device.

Please take time to review the following suggestions for how to talk with your child about this recent issue:

Reinforce a Sense of Safety for Students

Children may feel scared, threatened, or unsafe. Be reassuring. Children take their emotional cues from the significant adults in their lives. Recognize that some children may be concerned about something bad happening to themselves, their family or their friends. Encourage students to talk to the important adults in their lives if they have concerns about their safety.

Be a Good Listener and Observer

Let children guide you to learn how concerned they are or how much information they need. If they are not aware of the "challenge," do not bring it up. However, be available to answer their questions to the best of your ability. Young children may not be able to express themselves verbally. Pay attention to changes in their behavior or social interactions as indicators of potential distress.

Reach Out

Reach out to your school principal if you feel your child may be exhibiting significant reaction to this material. It may be helpful for some children to have their concerns addressed individually through our Board's psychology department.

Reinforce that Not Everything they See Online is True

Not all the information on the Internet comes from a reliable source and it is important for children to know the difference.

Encourage Open Dialogue

The communication you have with your child plays a key role in their safety. It is much more productive to encourage them to talk about their fears and concerns. A safe home environment and open dialogue is important when dealing with your child's well-being. Encourage your child to be open with you and to ask questions about what they see on the Internet.

Warn Children Not to Share Information that Might Identify them Online

It is important to make it very clear to children and youth that in the virtual world, not every person is a friend. Explain why it is not safe to share information such as address, telephone, schools or after school activities they attend.

The safety of our students is our top priority. Please do not hesitate to contact me via the school office if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

R. M. Amos
Principal