

Dear Parents / Guardians,

We have received questions and concerns regarding the Momo Challenge which has resurfaced on multiple social media platforms. The following information has been given to school districts through Safer Schools Together, and may provide you with further information and reminders about online safety:

The Momo Challenge first started in 2016 on a mobile instant messaging application called Whatsapp. A phone number associated with the name Momo and a picture of a girl with bulging eyes and widespread mouth would use a feature of the app called 'Quick Add' where the app would allow the user to add and message multiple numbers in a short period of time to then send messages back and forth with any individual who was willing to respond.

The nature of the messages usually start out innocent such as "wanna play a game?" which can then evolve into Momo encouraging the child to engage in self-harm and suicidal behaviours. The motive to follow through with the challenge is that Momo tells the child that they know where they live (the address can typically be found through reverse search of the phone number) along with their parent's name, which is generally connected to the phone number. This can escalate to threats towards family and or loved ones if they do not follow through with the challenge or if they contact local authorities.

Recently the Momo Challenge has reappeared in multiple YouTube videos that are specifically intended for younger audiences. Typically, the Momo Challenge will be featured in videos (such as Peppa Pig, Paw Patrol, Minecraft gameplay) that come from new or unreliable YouTube accounts and begins 5-10 minutes into the episode, after attempting to establish as a legitimate video.

Parents/Caregivers should carefully monitor what their children watch on YouTube and only allow them to watch trusted channels.

Online challenges such as the Momo Challenge unfortunately do circulate quite regularly. Parents should not overreact; however, it is important that they speak with their children regarding all aspects of their online activity and explain potential risk of using certain streaming platforms so that they can recognize dangerous online behaviour. If you have concerns about your children accessing Youtube, please be aware that you are able to block Youtube from your internet router <https://www.wikihow.com/Block-Unwanted-Site-From-Your-Router>.

We encourage you to take this opportunity to talk with your child about online safety and screen time. Here are some tips:

- Limit screen/device time for your child. (1-hour max for ages 2-7 and 2-hours max for ages 7 and up)
- Create screen-free times and zones within your home.
- Be aware of what social media your child is using and the channels they are watching
- If possible, watch with your child so that you are there to explain any questions they may have or to mitigate inappropriate content.
- Talk through information that they might find disturbing. “What have you heard?“, “What will help you feel safer?”

A resource you might find useful comes from the website Caring for Kids created by Canada’s pediatricians: [Screen time at home: Healthy habits](#)

The safety of students and staff in our district is paramount. If you have any questions, please don’t hesitate to contact your school Principal.

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