March 8, 2019

Dear Mount Horeb Area School District Families,

The internet is an incredible tool that can be used for learning and entertainment; however, it can also pose risks if precautions are not taken. These risks are constantly evolving, and that is the purpose of this letter. Increasingly, we are learning about something called the "Momo Challenge".

Last year, the "Momo Challenge" went viral online after young kids found Momo on many social media outlets, including Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp. It has resurfaced in the past few weeks through hidden apps (which can be kept on phones/tablets away from moms and dads) and websites. It is something our students are talking more about. The challenge is accompanied by a grotesque looking creature, "Momo", and is often accompanied by violent prompts "challenging" observers to stab people, take pills, and even kill themself. I am saddened to report the "challenge" is reportedly connected to several international teen suicides.

The safety and security of our students and staff remain our District's top priority. That is why we are sharing this information with our families. What can, we as caretakers, do to protect our children? The National Cyber Security Alliance has released recommendations for "Raising Digital Citizens." Below are a sampling of a few of the important recommendations:

- Remain positively engaged: Pay attention to and know the online environments your children use. Surf the web with them. Appreciate your children's participation in their online communities and show interest in their friends. Try to react constructively when they encounter inappropriate material. Make it a teachable moment.
- Support their good choices: Expand your children's online experience and their autonomy when developmentally appropriate, as they demonstrate competence in safe and secure online behavior and good decision making.
- Keep a clean machine: Safety and security start with protecting all family computers with a security suite that is set to update automatically.
- Know the protection features of the websites and software your children use: All major internet service providers have tools to help manage young children's online experience and may have other security features, such as pop-up blockers. Third-party tools are also available. But remember, that your home isn't the only place they can go online.
- Review privacy settings: Look at privacy settings available on social networking sites, smartphones, apps and other social tools your children use.
- Explain the implications: Help your children understand the public nature of the internet and its risks and benefits. Be sure they know that any digital information they share, such as emails, photos or videos, can easily be copied and pasted elsewhere and is almost impossible to take back.
- Help them be good digital citizens: Remind your child to be a good "digital friend" by respecting personal information of friends and family and not sharing anything about others that is potentially embarrassing or hurtful.
- For the full list and additional recommendations visit:
  https://staysafeonline.org/get-involved/at-home/raising-digital-citizens

Please rest assured, the Mount Horeb Area School District remain partners with you in this important effort. The District takes precautions such as filtering and blocking internet traffic (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, Whatsapp, many forums, pornography, violent and adult content) for all students based on Children's Internet Protection Act. In addition, our devoted Library and Media Specialists are teaching digital citizenship lessons. Our response continues to evolve in an effort to stay ahead of new trends.

Of course, if your student has been a victim of this latest trend or we can ever be of service to you/your family, please do not hesitate to reach out to a member of your school's Student Services Team.

Sincerely,

Mr. Brian Johnson   Mr. Josh Cataldo
Director of Student Services   Technology Coordinator