

Online Safety

Dear Families,

As you may be aware, there has been recent media attention on an Internet challenge that may cause concern for families. The Internet provides access to many engaging learning opportunities, but requires responsible use and digital citizenship. Parents play an important role in ensuring their child's safety, including on the Internet. It's important for parents to talk to children about the importance of being safe, protecting their personal information and stressing that they should never disclose personal details that would allow someone online to contact them in real life.

Here are 12 tips to promote safe online behaviour:

- Children should never give anyone their name, address, telephone number, computer password, or any other personal information on the Internet without parental or guardian consent.
- Children should only use social media and websites approved by their parent or guardian.
- Internet use should be encouraged in a central place in your home where you can supervise children's online activities.
- Don't allow a webcam in a child's bedroom.
- Watch for children quickly minimizing sites when you enter the room.
- Reinforce that people online may not be who they say they are.
- Consider using parental controls like Internet filters or blocking software.
- Remind children that everything said online stays in cyberspace forever, whether or not it is deleted.
- Talk to your children about Internet safety and clearly define your rules.
- Never respond to messages that make them feel confused or uncomfortable.
- Pay attention to the games your children may download or copy.
- Never arrange a face-to-face meeting with someone they meet online.

Reinforce a sense of safety. Some Internet content can evoke a sense of fear or lack of safety in your child. It can be difficult for some children to discern fact / fiction online. Try to offer reassurance that your child is safe. Children and youth take their emotional cues from the significant adults in their lives. Your reactions can help to model calmness to your child. Recognize that some children may be concerned about something bad happening to themselves, family or friends. Explain to them the safety measures in place and reassure them that you and other adults will take care of them.

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 focused on the issue, do not dwell on it. 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 behaviour or social interactions.

Reach out. Reach out to the school if you feel that your child may be showing a significant reaction to online material. We may be able to offer some classroom strategies that could help reduce stress. It may

also be important to seek additional support from a school mental health professional (i.e., social worker or psychologist) to cope with overwhelming feelings experienced by children and youth.

Sincerely,

Angie Furlin

Principal